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ROBERT BURNS'S COUNTRY

THE HEART OF AYRSHIRE

By George McLean Harper

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANK L. EMANUEL

I REMEMBER, when I was a child, snatching a fearful joy from surreptitious glimpses of a wicked picture in a copy of Burns belonging to my grandfather, who was a minister. I would loiter in his library after reciting my Latin to this grave and venerable man, and affect an interest in other books, Rutherford's "Letters," perhaps, or Turrettini's "Body of Divinity," till I thought I might venture a glance into the big "Burns." The print, to which I then greedily turned, raised in my breast certain delicious points of casuistry. For it illustrated, with no sparing of details as to horns and cloven hoofs or any other requisite, the breathless jig which Burns composed extempore at a meeting of gaugers, "The Deil's awa wi' the Exciseman"—an improper picture for me to look at, I well knew, and how much worse, then, for a minister to possess! And, moreover, a Scotch minister, Scotchmen being regarded in our village as more pious than other people. On the other hand, being a Scotchman, was it not fitting that he should honor the great poet? And was it not well, indeed, that a minister should have a human side and take his Burns straight, swallowing the muckle devil and "The Cotter's Saturday Night" boldly together? My opinion of the gentle old man was rather elevated than depressed by mature consideration of this subject and its outlying branches. The good things of life, I instinctively felt, went along with the real things. The grin and fling of animal spirits, the mysterious movings of Nature, the earthly mould, the fleshly habitation, had claims upon us, and it was to his credit that my grandfather, though a minister, and Scotch, was man enough to face facts.

There is a twinkle of humor, as I have since learned, in the eye of every Scot, which proclaims him capable of seeing subjects in more than one light. The Scotch feel the sting of the senses, I am convinced, as keenly as men of any other race, and are as soon set a-quiver with the caresses of the Earth-Spirit. If they have got a reputation for self-mastery they have fairly earned it. Contrary to what is perhaps the prevalent opinion, I have found them vivacious, gay, and wildly disposed, as quick-witted and mobile as the French, and almost as sentimental as the Germans. Their ancestors played strange tricks upon themselves at the Reformation, and the game was kept up with a grim face during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, until, by the time Burns appeared, Scotland, and almost every Scottish heart, were curiously divided into two imperfectly related societies. On the one hand was an ascetic disdain of luxury, pomp, art, and even the comforts and amenities of existence; on the other hand an eager joy in life. There were not a few generous and ample souls in whom a love of spiritual perfection mingled harmoniously with a more instinctive acceptance of things as they are; but the tendency was to go to extremes. Many of the strongest natures in Scottish history were either fanatics or sensualists, either austerely self-repressed or fiercely self-willed.

The Renaissance in Scotland was rather the liberation of the middle and lower

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classes from the oppression of monks and lords than the birth of humanism. It brought about the establishment of a popular religion and a popular system of education, and made Scotland one of the most democratic countries in the world, but did little at first to advance the arts or refine the manners of the nation. The Palace of James V in Stirling Castle is as good an illustration of this failure as one need look for. Its decorations are grotesque and barbarous, a travesty of art, and an index to the levity, the grossness, of the Scottish court. Among the people, however, in course of time, the parish schools and the universities fostered a regard for learning and provided an outlook over the world of history, philosophy, and literature. By the middle of the eighteenth century, a large part of the Lowland population, even to the class of small tenant farmers and village artisans, were free and enlightened, and were finding scope, in the national poetry, history, and theology, for the exercise of their native love of romance and their skill in logical discussion. This emancipation is justly accredited to the Reformation, and particularly to John Knox.

No more than anywhere else, however, has the town workingman been puritanized or spiritualized in Scotland. To all appearances, the man with a greasy neck-cloth wound about his throat, the man with a red nose generally, whom one sees at dock or factory work or dismally looking for diversion in Scotch cities, is alien to the kirk. The ideal world, whether of the present or of the future, the world of romance and excitement, adventure, gayety, and color, for which he has a natural and lively desire, he beholds chiefly through the bottom of a whiskey glass, and from Monday to Saturday his soul abhors the deception, and he is sombre and looks unhappy. I am referring, with that small degree of right which casual observation gives a traveller, to the foul dregs of the large towns, obviously the victims of drink and *ennui*, and apparently more sodden and more numerous proportionally than the corresponding class in Continental, English, and American cities. It would seem that a Puritan civilization affords too little harmless dissipation and sets its more spiritual benefits beyond the reach of these poor people.

There is one small district in Ayrshire where the brave but narrow religious life of Puritan Scotland, the belated humanism of the eighteenth century, and the comment of genius upon them both are brought to mind in a half-day's walk. In so short a time did I behold the grave of the Prophet Peden, the ancestral home of James Boswell, and the fields where Robert Burns strove to accommodate in his spacious sympathy the bitter and the sweet of Scottish life.

I was told by the keeper of the Burns monument at the Brig o' Doon that more than ten thousand pilgrims had visited that shrine, and doubtless also the birthplace hard by, in one week last summer. At that rate a large part of the world needs no description of the cottage where the poet was born. Neither the Shakespeare house at Stratford, nor the Goethe house at Frankfurt, plays so affectingly upon one's emotions. This is a far humbler birthplace—a closet in a kitchen—and the great son of that little house died a cottager as he began. There was no New Place and no Weimar mansion in store for him. The sympathetic tear springs as naturally there, I think, as in any other of earth's memorable spots, and it swells on a flood of pride—pride that a man, and a very poor man, could be so great. I thought scorn of the ostentatiously rich family whom I met descending from a motor-car at the door. Very likely they shed tears in the cottage themselves, and felt scorn for nobody. Burns is the poor man's poet, and the best beloved by humble and unlettered people. His fame is, in so far, more general than Shakespeare's. It goes deeper.

It is true that the poet was born near Ayr, and travellers who have seen the Cottage, and the Twa Brigs, and Alloway Kirk, and the Brig o' Doon have been vividly reminded of his humble origin and of several of his best poems. A group of villages further inland was, however, the scene of his fullest activity, his loves and friendships, his early efforts to be a good farmer, and the experiences and observations from which most of his satires and epistles and first songs came. We had seen Ayr and its surroundings, and were glad to accept the offer of a gentleman whose grandfather Burns knew and loved, to go with us to these places in the heart of Ayrshire. "We will catch Hendry's waggonette and go

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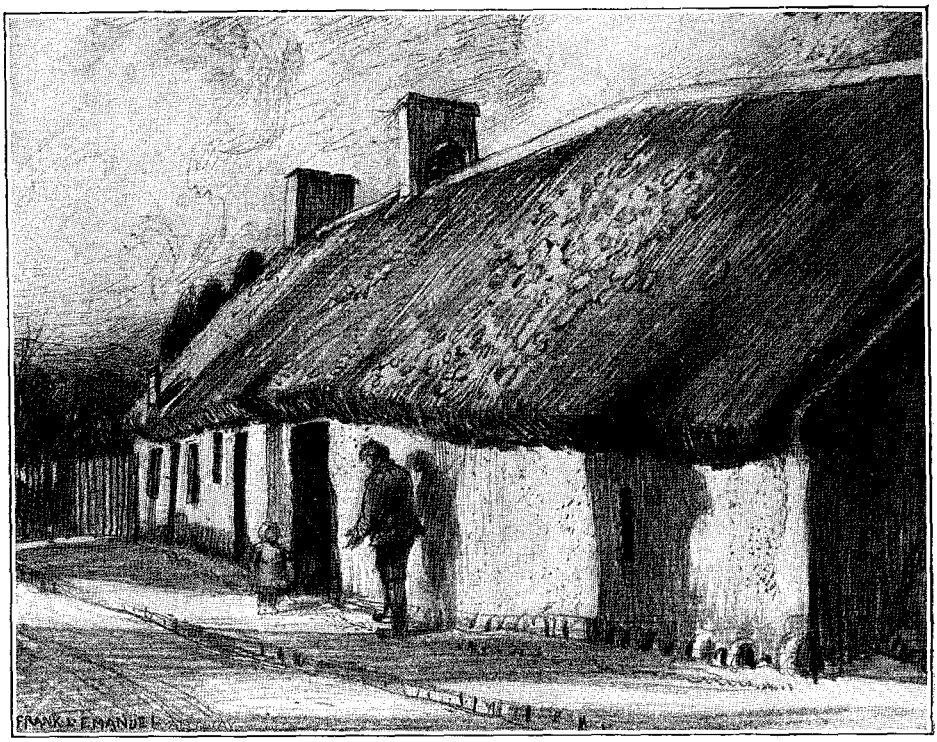

The Burns cottage (birthplace) at Alloway.

first to Old Cumnock and see the grave of the Prophet Peden, and then come back to Ochiltree for a quiet Sunday, and after that see Auchinleck and Catrine and Mauchline and Mossgiel and Tarbolton."

So on a bright Saturday morning in July we set forth from Ayr, the American professor, our genial Ayrshire friend, and I, and in less than an hour had been left at a small station and were walking over the bold rolling country towards a cross-roads where Mr. Hendry's conveyance was to pass at a certain hour. One peculiarity of Ayrshire scenery is that a good deal of it is visible from any point of considerable elevation, and this too in spite of the fact that the country is well wooded. Hedges and walls are low and the face of the country is openly displayed.

"Yonder flows the Lugar," said Mr. T., with a wave of his arm, "and yon are the banks of 'winding Ayr,' where Burns took leave of Highland Mary—

'Still o'er these scenes my memory wakes,
And fondly broods with miser care;
Time but the impression stronger makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.'

And through that wood we shall come to the braes of Ballochmyle. The family at Ballochmyle House were ill pleased to have a ploughman sing of their young lady; but 'tis now their boast.

'But here at last for me nae mair
Shall birdie charm or floweret smile;
Fareweel the bonnie banks of Ayr!
Fareweel, fareweel, sweet Ballochmyle.'"

"I doubt you've never heard in America of the University of Ochiltree; yet if you look you'll see it there, at the head of the brae, in Ochiltree village. Just a plain parish school, such as John Knox set up in every town in Scotland; but we had an excellent teacher, a college graduate, who took us through six books of Homer and a good deal of Virgil, Ovid, and Livy. You'll be having much better schools in America, of course, scattered over the country?"

As Mr. T. is not naturally a cruel man, he relieved us from the necessity of replying by calling attention to the carrier's waggonette, which was approaching. The grand big horse, Mr. Hendry himself, a small, white-haired, apple-cheeked man, with a keen twinkling light in his blue eyes, and

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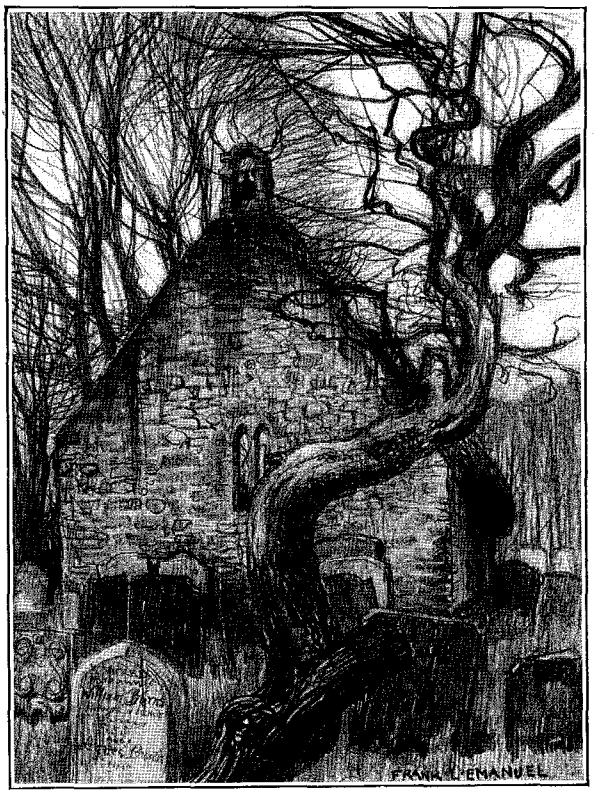
the load of women, babies, and boys which filled every part of the vehicle, made a picture of rustic locomotion; and there was a fine display of courtesy when the boys jumped out to walk, the mothers crowded close together, and the babies were allowed to sit on our knees. English country boys, though I like them well enough, do not particularly remind me of American boys, but Scotch boys, especially the barefoot village boys of Ayrshire, reminded me individually of this, that, and the other companion of my youth. The eye which never loses sight of yours, the bare, free brow, the freckles, the plucky mouth, the engaging air of freedom and enterprise and humor, in more than one Ayrshire face, brought up the image of a little group of schoolmates, now scattered from Pennsylvania to New Mexico. The Scotch boys whom I've met on roads and hill-sides have always been about some business of their own, and very much interested in its outcome—evidently had something on their minds, some adventure in hand. They were hurrying to some rendezvous or wearily returning with jars and cans full of tadpoles, or with strings of fish or combs of wild honey. I remember a silent, stoical file of little fellows who passed me once on Arthur's Seat, returning from



Alloway Kirk.

(The grave of Burns's parents in foreground.)

Duddingston or Craigmillar or the distant seashore, the foremost picking the easiest way with bleeding feet, the two smallest lagging behind, their set faces convulsed by sobs. It was all so natural, and took me back to the afternoon when six of us shut ourselves up in our barn at home and beat one another's legs amicably with cornstalks till the blood flowed.

Mr. T. is a specialist on churchyards, as well as a repository of Covenanter traditions, and the most delightful lover of Burns I have ever met. When, therefore, we had driven up the long street of Old

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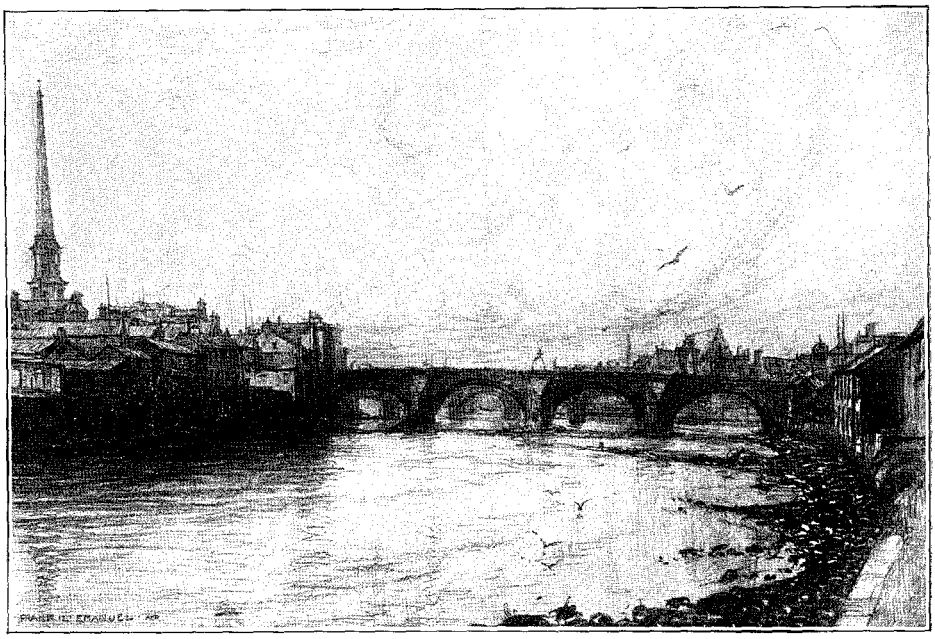

Twa Brigs o' Ayr.

Cumnock, where modern two-story houses have only half supplanted the old white-washed, thatched, one-story cottages, and had disentangled our cramped legs and descended beside the parish cross, we found ourselves presently at the grave of the Prophet Peden, reading one of those vindictive epitaphs by which the Covenanters and their children unto the third and fourth generation sought to keep alive the memory of the persecuting time. This spot was once a place of execution, the Gallows Hill. A passion of love and pride consecrated it to another use more than two hundred years ago. The story is not without a touch of weirdness. Few incidents better illustrate the national character and the strange vicissitudes of Scottish history. Alexander Peden was one of the ministers who refused to submit to Episcopal "collation" when the restored Stuart kings were trying to abash free Presbyterianism. It was death to lodge or feed him or to follow him to the hills and listen to his words. He hid in caves along the Lugar and the Ayr, baptizing children, performing marriages, burying the dead, preaching on the lonely moors, where the white fog fell in answer to his prayer "Cast the lap of thy cloak over auld Sandy and thir puir things, and save us this ane time" heartening faint outcasts with his humor, his anecdotes, his confident predictions, aflame always with patriotic zeal, crying "He is not worth his room in Scotland the day, that prayeth not the half of his time, to see if he can prevent the dreadful wrath that is at your door, coming on your poor motherland." With sadness he foretold the capture of this man, the treachery of that, the slaughter of a bridegroom he was marrying, the rout in the Pentlands and at Bothwell Brig; and these things came to pass. He had but to point a finger at the scoffing maid-servant on the Bass Rock, and she flung herself into the sea; at the soldier who was guarding him, and he refused to serve any more against the King of kings. On the misty moorland simple men caught sight of this portentous figure, "in grey clothes," wearing "a fause-face," his sword, an Andrea Ferrara, clanking as he stalked away; and they readily believed him inspired. Of the faithful Covenanter preachers in the West, Peden was about the only one who escaped death at the hands of the prelatists. But they harried him to his life's end in 1686. The laird of Auchinleck offered the Boswell family tomb for the repose of his body. After six weeks it was dug up by spiteful adversaries, "out of contempt," as his old gravestone records. The winding-sheet flew from their grasp and

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settled on an oak tree, which thenceforth ceased to grow upwards, spreading out horizontally, as if in awe. The body was dragged to the gallows foot in Old Cumnock, two miles away. Thereupon the people of that parish placed their own dead near it. Peden's dust can scarcely be said to rest in peace even now, for the vengeful inscriptions above it and on the gravestones of three other martyrs of the killing time taint the air. I saw the oak tree bowing still its awe-struck head.

One might, at first thought, wish that the numerous martyrs' monuments throughout Scotland might be removed—even the bitter record in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh, and even the stone among the Pentlands which commemorates the charitable deed of a brave farmer to an Unknown Covenanter after the slaughter on Rullion Green. Who, we ask, would lay down his life now for a matter of church government? What but unchristian feelings can be inculcated at these places of bloody execution, where one reads

"This stone shall witness be
'Twixt Presbyterie and Prelacie."

But on reflection I think we cannot spare any of these truth-telling stones. Their language does not exaggerate. We have it in our power to fix our attention upon the courage and constancy of the "elect," who were driven by uncomprehending tyranny from their bare farms to the barer moors, and overlook the lesson of hatred which their followers sought to teach in carven monuments. The blue banner of the Covenant was borne, through apparent defeat, to an ideal victory; and, to say the least, a sombre gleam of romance rests upon these scattered graves and lonely scenes of blood.

The Brig o' Doon.

My desire to buy some kippered herring in Old Cumnock occasioned a pretty exhibition of Scotch thoughtfulness. "Could we

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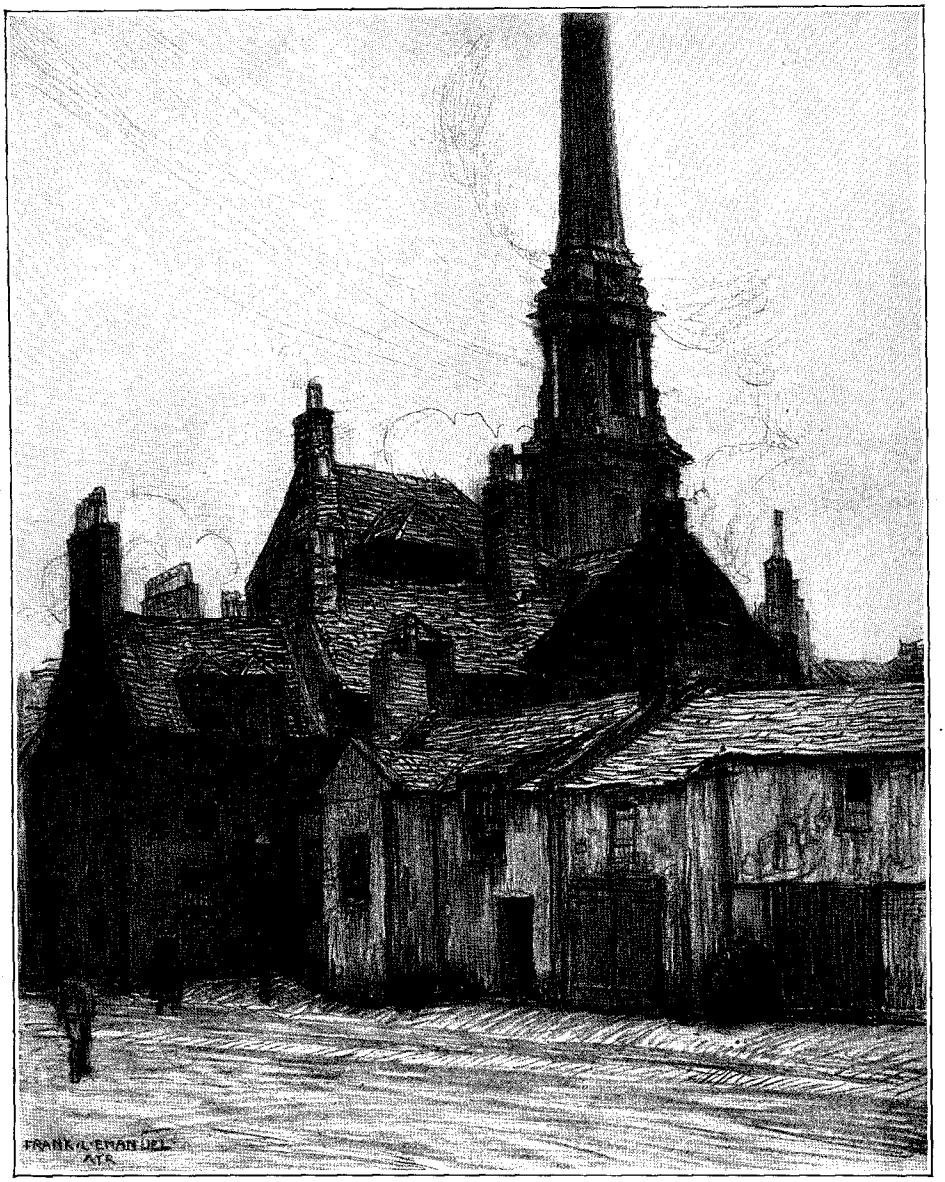

Old Ayr.
(The buildings in mid-distance are Loudoun Lodge, anciently the seaside mansion of the Earls of Loudoun.)

ask Mrs. Probert, of the Head Inn at Ochiltree, to have them cooked for us? Would it not offend her to have her own larder slighted?" Thus the American professor, who was born and bred in Scotland. Mr. T., as a son of Ochiltree, thought we might put it to Mrs. Probert in such a way as to avoid offence, and so the odorous parcel was pocketed. Again the carrier's wagon was overcrowded, worse than before, and with an equally good-natured company, encouraged by proximity to lively conversation in very broad Scotch. The professor and I, and a young man of the country squeezed into the front seat beside Mr. Hendry. He beguiled the way by questioning the professor about America. "There will be no enclosures in America like these," pointing to the hedges; "it will all be open, no doubt, and as soon as a man

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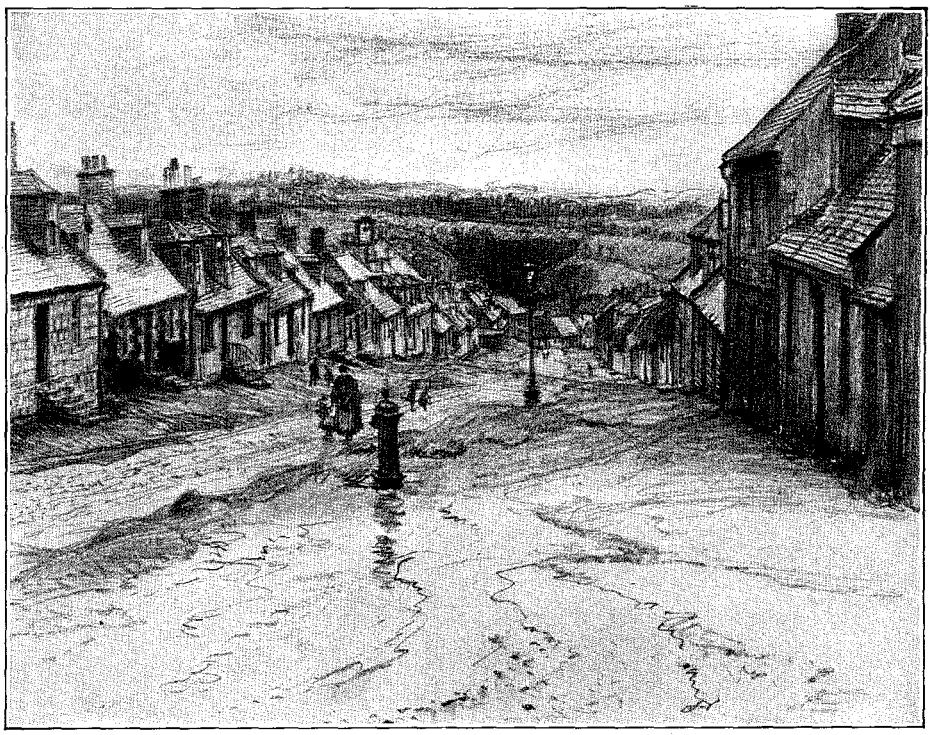
drives out of one of your big cities he goes over hill and vale straight before him, without a road, till he comes to the place he would be at. You will observe," he remarked, "that a Scotchman thinks. He may be quiet, but he is aye thinking." I nudged my friend, the supposed American, and the phrase has become a by-word with us.



Looking down High Street, Ochiltree.
(*The third house from the left of the drawing is "The House with the Green Shutters."*)

There was a fine play of shadows and wandering lights over the dark green rolling country. The farmlands lay high; the water-courses were deep and richly wooded. The prospects were singularly wide. The holdings appeared to be of good size, averaging perhaps a hundred and fifty acres, and the buildings were capacious and clean, all of stone, and generally whitewashed. Here and there the upper works of a coal-mine led to an expectation of ugliness and squalor, but coming close we found the fair face of Nature very little disfigured, and among the most tasteful houses were the homes of miners, handsome sandstone buildings with neat grass-plots in front and a glory of climbing roses. It was a surprise to see the grimy faces of coal-miners at the windows of such houses, and I thought with discomfort of the ugly unpainted wooden shanties around some of the pit-mouths near Scranton and Wilkesbarre, unattractive abodes of men who, as a class, deserve well of the world, like sailors, trainmen, and physicians, for the dangerous and necessary work they perform. I do not believe anything in Scotland has given me much greater pleasure than the sight of those black miners looking out between lace curtains.

At last, from Mr. T.'s rising excitement, it was plain that we were approaching Ochiltree, where he was born, and where he and his sister still own and sometimes inhabit the ancestral "but and ben." Their grandfather and great-grandfather lived on Glenconner farm, visible from the village, and there Burns often visited his friend James Tennant, his

"Auld comrade dear, and brither sinner,"

to whose father, bearing after Scottish

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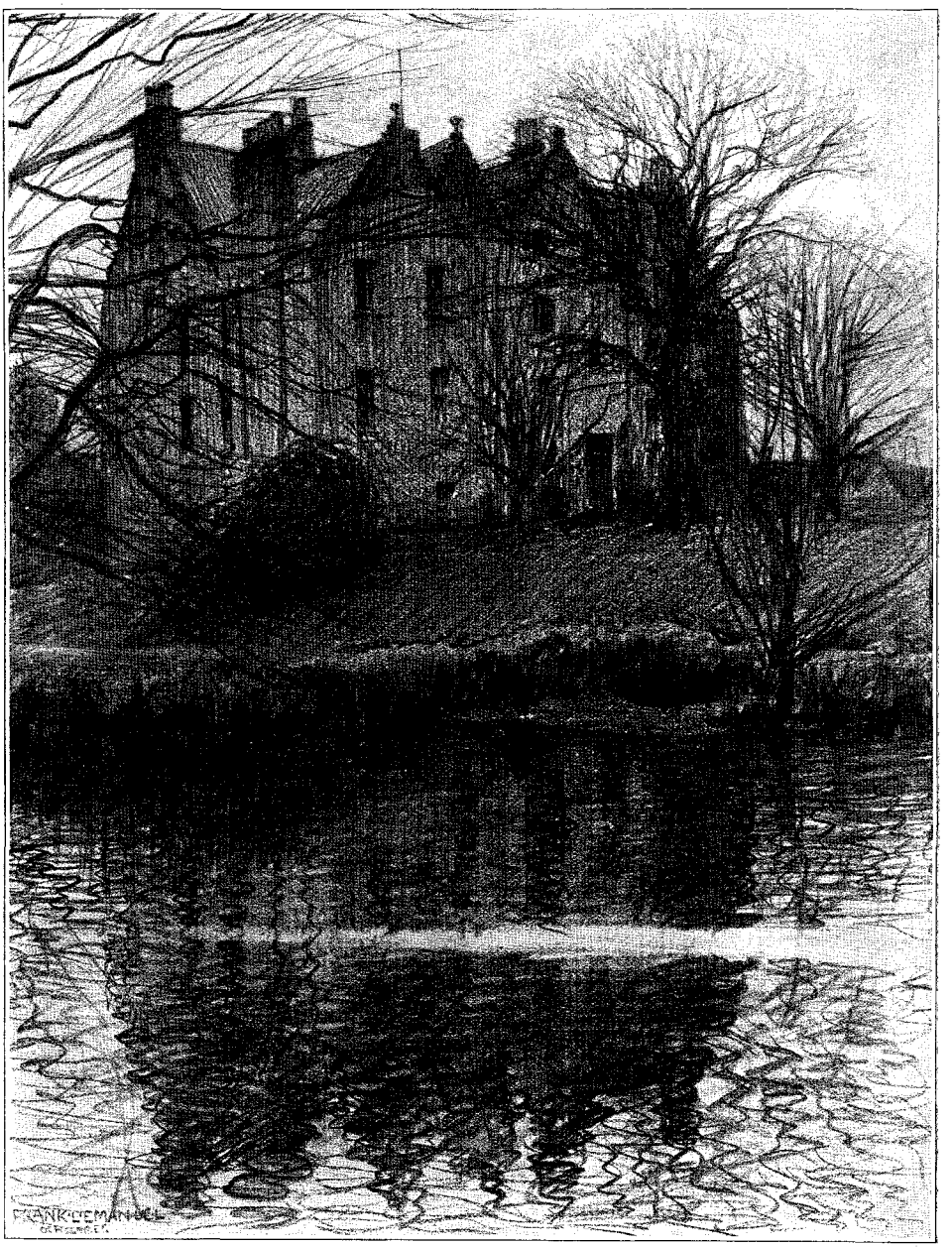

Ochiltree House.

fashion the place-name Glenconner, he referred in the famous lines,

"My heart-warm love to guid auld Glen,
The ace an' wale of honest men."

Where else in the world do farmers lend one another volumes of philosophy or peruse "Bunyan, Brown, an' Boston"?

"I've sent you here, by Johnnie Simson,
Twa sage philosophers to glimpse on!
Smith, wi' his sympathetic feeling,
An' Reid, to common sense appealing."

Burns expected his neighbor to read the books, and was in a hurry to have them back:

"But hark ye, frien'! I charge you strictly,
Peruse them, an' return them quickly."

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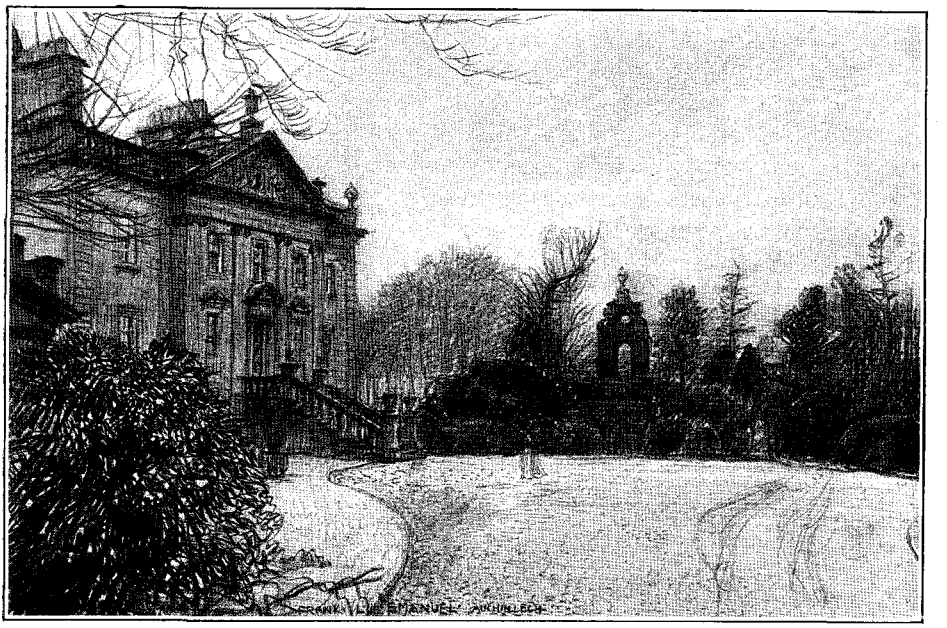

Auchinleck House.

I have seen a fair number of Scotch villages, and Ochiltree is the most Scotch. One long street, in three reaches, flows down the hill-side. From the head of the brae you see about one-third of its length, to the kirk; here it bends, and you may go a step further and see the village cross, at the end of another third; and at the cross you begin the last stretch. This winding and sloping street is lined for the most part with one-story houses, each offering a door flanked by two small windows. Thatch makes them look old and whitewash fresh. They stand shoulder to shoulder, and few have front yards. To an extent unusual in countries north of Italy, the scenes of village life are enacted in the public view, on the street, and about open doors. From what I saw of the play, it is no such tragic stuff as an Ochiltree boy, George Douglas Brown, put into his "House with the Green Shutters," one of the most vital works of fiction in our time. Since Ochiltree has begun to realize that a substantial and lasting fame was achieved through that terrible novel, the house, near the head of the brae, where Brown was born, has been distinguished with green shutters, almost the only shutters in the place, and quite incongruous. The corner-stone of the parish church was laid by James Boswell. In spite of this recommendation, which I daresay found no favor in their eyes, Boswell's philosophy of religion being considered, the disruptionists erected a Free kirk around the corner, in a cross street. It is common to deplore the expense of this doubling of church buildings and ministers and the halving of congregations, which have taken place in so many Scottish parishes, but I could never discover that anything worse than pecuniary loss had resulted. I have observed no bitterness between the two bodies. Their slight differences afford persons who are very particular an opportunity to gratify their tastes with some degree of nicety. One church is said to be more liberal than the other in matters of theology. Perhaps it may go further in that direction and become the home of the many who will be ill at ease in orthodox societies when the people follow the younger generation of ministers in their changed views of the Bible.

In a dark grove, just beyond the lower end of the village, rise the high, crow-stepped gables of an ancient mansion that has given shelter to two famous men upon an interesting occasion in the life of each. For in Ochiltree House John Knox was married, and who else but Claverhouse! Leaning for shelter against the high wall that surrounds Ochiltree House are some

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old tombstones in a half-forgotten graveyard. The gate was locked, but imitating a small boy in an Eton jacket who climbed into the park over the wall, we climbed over the gate into the graveyard, not to look for Covenanter rhymes, but for the names of James Tennant and of "winsome Willie" Simpson, poet and schoolmaster in Ochiltree, with whom Burns once made a compact to cause the rivers of Ayrshire to be renowned in song:

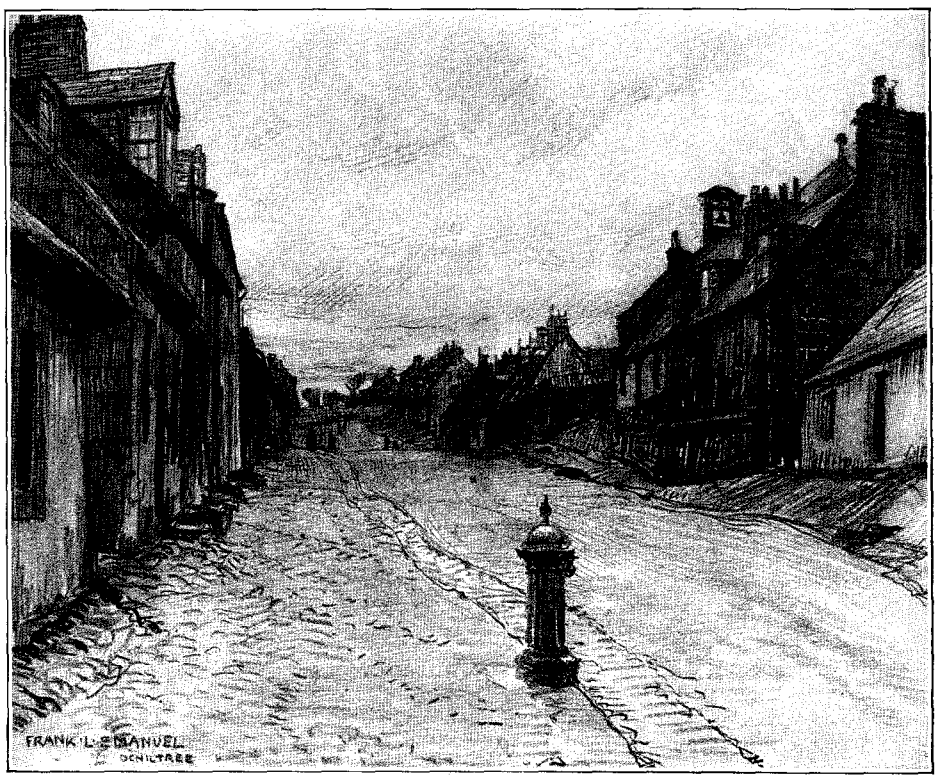
"Ramsay an' famous Fergusson
Gied Forth an' Tay a lift aboon;
Yarrow an' Tweed, to monie a tune,
Owre Scotland rings,
While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, an' Doon
Naebody sings.

"Th' Illissus, Tiber, Thames an' Seine
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line;
But, Willie, set your fit to mine,
An' cock your crest,
We'll gar our streams an' burnies shine
Up wi' the best."

In the same epistle come the delicious lines:

"The Muse, nae poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel' he learned to wander
Adown some trotting burn's meander,
An' no think lang;
Oh, sweet to stray an' pensive ponder
A heartfelt sang."

The satirical postscript to this epistle gives an amusing explanation of the points at issue between the Auld Licht and the New Licht ministers, just "a moonshine matter." As to the issue between the poet on the one hand and Scotch religion on the other, no traveller in Ayrshire is permitted to remain indifferent. The conviction grows upon one that the greatest song-writer of modern times, perhaps of all time, was scarcely less remarkable as a satirist. These fields and clustered villages presented to his penetrating gaze an abbreviated world. Knowing the virtues and follies, the enthusiasms, the hypocrisies, the labors and sports, the comedies and tragedies of Kyle—this little district which formed for him one community, in the heart of Ayrshire—he was able to instruct the world. He did for Scotland what Lafontaine in a more conspicuous, though



Looking up Ochiltree High Street (the church belfry on the right).

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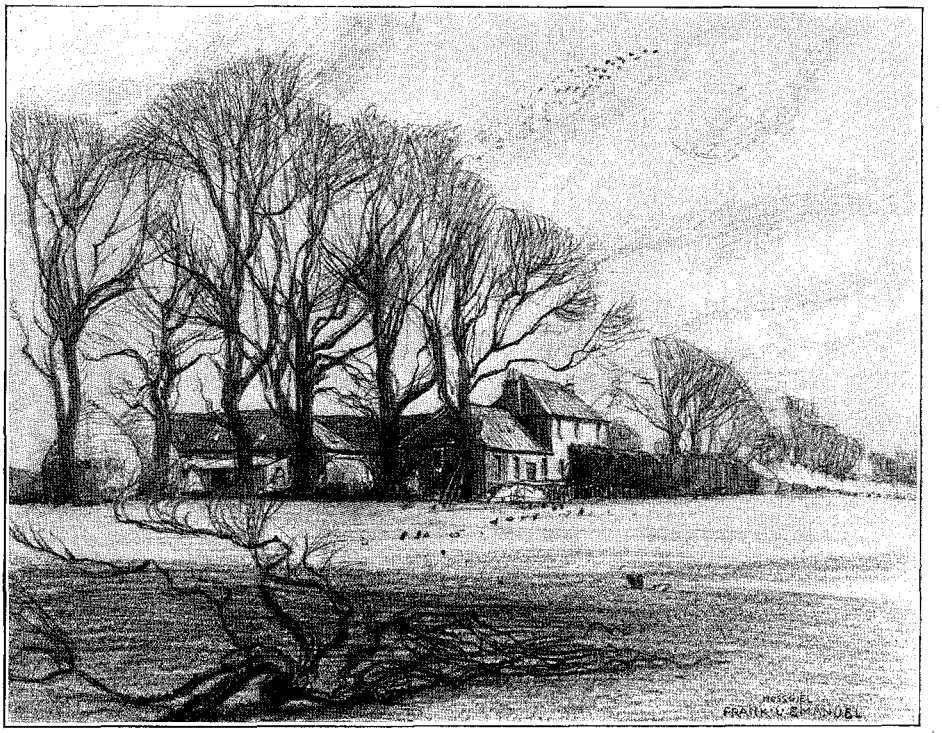

Mossgiel Farm.

really narrower sphere, did for France in the seventeenth century. He drew up closer to the objects of his attack than even Voltaire or Swift. What he ridiculed was not, generally, the perversity or the stupidity of a nation, but some immediate departure from natural and humane conduct, something at Tarbolton or Mauchline which touched him unpleasantly. Hence his passion. True, he professed a rationalistic philosophy, derived from the dominant French writers of the age and the British deists; but in large measure his views of life originated in his own experience, and of course they were vitalized with personal feeling and winged with local phrases. Thus he gave a humorous rather than a bitter turn to his satire. He knew its objects, in most cases, as "brither sinners" and fellow Ayrshiremen. The undeniable virtues of most of them were present in his mind, along with their odious orthodoxy. His own shortcomings, too, made it impossible for him, Rob the Ranter, to set up as a quite serious judge of morals. Hence his good-nature. And on the whole, then, it was instinct, not theory, personal grievance, not party prejudice, that brought him to a glow. On the unequal distribution of wealth, for instance, he is excited to comment by thinking how easily he, a hard-working, well-meaning young man, may be reduced

> "To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
> When banes are crazed, and bluid is thin";

though the reflection takes a wider sweep and is tinged with the sentimentalism of Rousseau, when he cries:

> "It's no in titles nor in rank,
> It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
> To purchase peace and rest;
> It's no in making muckle mair,
> It's no in books, it's no in lear,
> To make us truly blest:
> If happiness hae not her seat
> And centre in the breast,
> We may be wise, or rich, or great,
> But never can be blest.
> Nae treasures, nor pleasures
> Could make us happy lang;
> The heart aye's the part aye
> That makes us right or wrang."

On the harshness of church discipline and the hypocrisy of some who make profession of religion, he is called to express himself

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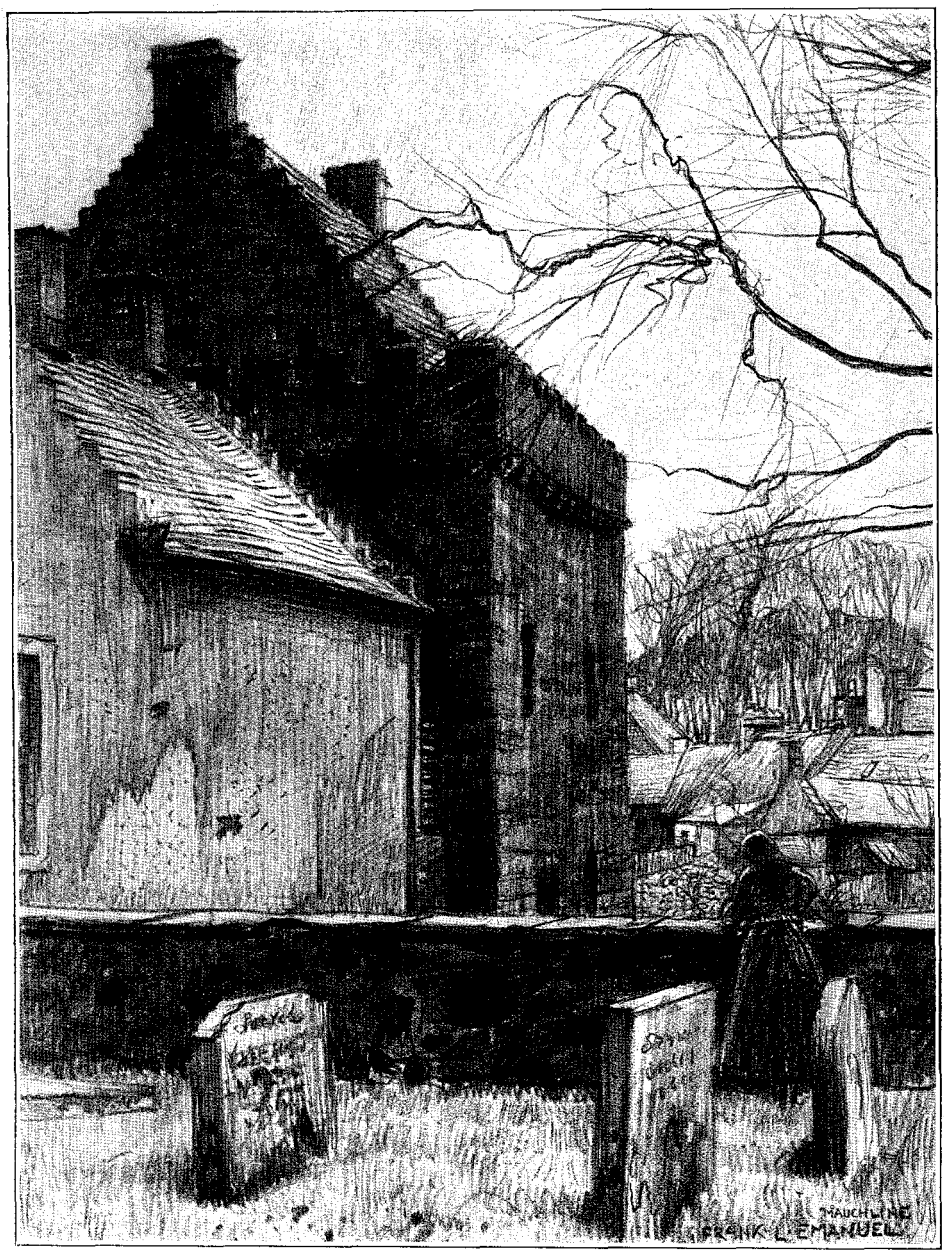

Mauchline Castle (in which Burns was married) and a corner of Mauchline churchyard.

when, shamed yet defiant, he flings out of meeting after being disciplined for his misdeeds; but from the "Epistle to John Rankine," full of personal bitterness and the consciousness of guilt, there is a long step upward to the good sense, clear rationalism, and strong public interest of "The Holy Fair." What "Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon" is to other songs "The Holy Fair" is to other satires. It is altogether Scotch. It is provincial—nay, purely local. It records a moment in the personal life of Burns. Yet for all that, the wide world feels it. A fable of Lafontaine, a *conte* of Voltaire, does not blight a more universal crop of vanities.

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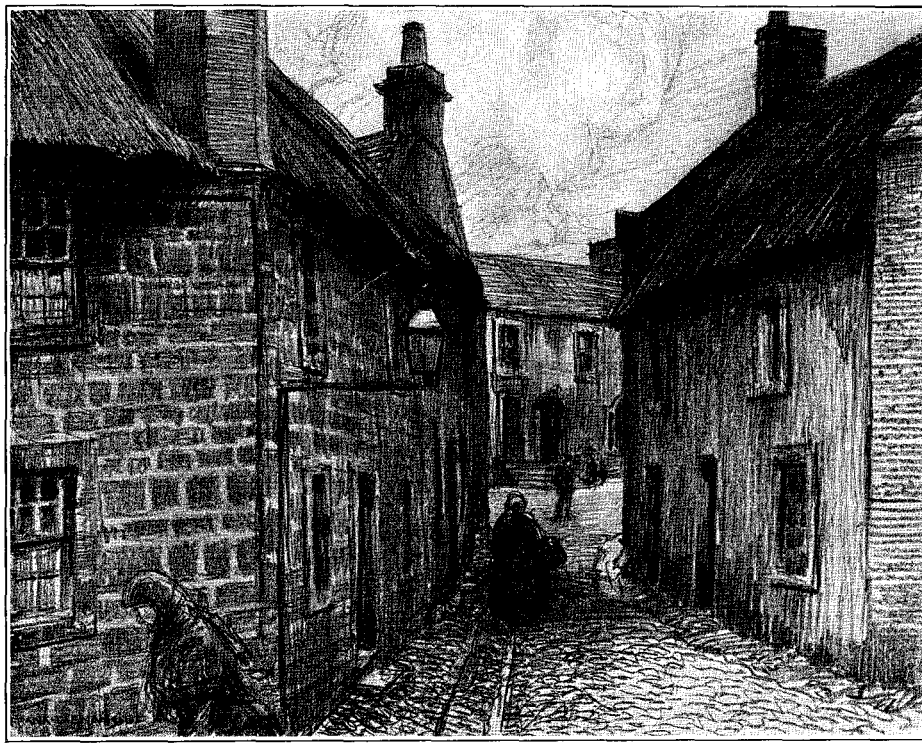

Poosie Nancy's (on the left) at Mauchline, where Burns started housekeeping.

To the uninstructed or the innocent the verses of this rankling satire may have appeared a lyrical outpouring, here sweet, there gay and wanton. Certainly no opening could be more demure than the first lines:

"Upon a simmer Sunday morn,
When Nature's face is fair,
I walkèd forth to view the corn
And snuff the caller air.
The rising sun o'er Galston muirs
Wi' glorious light was glintin';
The hares were hirplin' down the furs;
The laverocks they were chantin',
Fu' sweet that day."

The frank young ploughman, thus early abroad, and surveying the acres which have been the scene of his week's labor, encounters "three hizzies," whom he describes in a manner that puts prose paraphrase to shame. They are Superstition, Hypocrisy, and Fun. He accompanies them to the open-air service held in Mauchline churchyard, and pictures with intense animosity the ministers from that and neighboring parishes whom he finds preaching there. No doubt the portraits were sufficiently accurate to cause dismay, but whether they were just is another question. A great literary genius has an immense advantage with posterity as against even a whole presbytery. It may well be that of his originals some were bigoted, some sensual, some double-faced; but it is not likely that they were, as a whole, either worse or better than other men of the same profession. Merely it was their misfortune to have this young farmer for a neighbor. And so it is best not to regard "The Holy Fair" as a contribution to the history of Scotland. Yet there was no doubt a particular remoteness from reality in the religion of that time and country. Strained, abstract, unnatural, tending to create a hierarchy of domineering "divines" and a mob of "yill-caup commentators," who raised a din "wi' logic an' wi' Scripture," it was transparent moonshine to a man whom Nature had brought up at her own knee. Between the Poet and the Priest such warfare goes on forever. Clearly the advantage this time was with the Poet.

As I stood in Mauchline graveyard, half-

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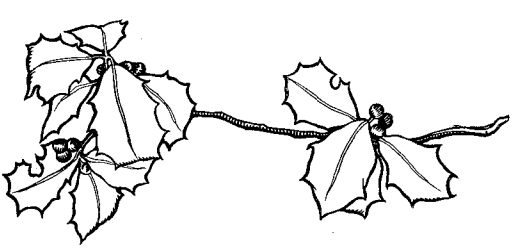
way between the church and the tavern, the sun was darkened and a sense of oppression seized me. The town appeared sunken, dingy. Here, in the field where they once held high jurisdiction, moulder "Holy Willie" and "Daddy" Auld. Over yonder is the one small room where the great poet began housekeeping as a married man. Here the battle went hard with him. It could not have been cheerful to look every day upon a graveyard and brood over the excessive claims of an unamiable religion. The intellectual companionship afforded by the masonic lodge in Tarbolton must have been pitifully inadequate for a man of whom the wits of Edinburgh declared that his genius flamed more brightly in his conversation than in his poetry. Temptation to drink was strong, and opportunity to drink abounded on every hand. We are here in touch with squalor. The thought of his manly heart enduring such contact and his noble powers thus hemmed in was suffocating.

Out of Mauchline we climbed into the purer air and sweeter associations of Mossgiel Farm. We took shelter in the house from a shower, and conversed with the farmer, whose father held the lease fifty years ago and was separated by but one other tenant from Robert and Gilbert Burns. In their time the leasehold was for about one hundred acres. The present two-story farmhouse is built up on the walls of the old one-story cottage which they occupied. They were not successful farmers, but the poet was happy at Mossgiel. Here flowed his most spontaneous verse. From these high-lying fields he swept with a glance the world which was the subject of his sagacious comment. It is no longer deemed sufficient to qualify Burns as a sweet song-writer in the Doric. His is by far the best poetry the British Isles can boast, from the death of Milton to the opening of the nineteenth century. And perhaps no more discerning eye, no more comprehensive understanding, no more penetrating judgment ever in that time surveyed the conduct of men. What an amazing thought—that a few rural parishes, between Ochiltree on the west and Tarbolton on the east, afforded sufficient training and sufficient scope to this critical genius, gave him knowledge and occasion!

Tarbolton and Catrine and Lochlea, we saw them all, but Ochiltree was still our centre, and "Oh, if I could only have ye here for a fortnight," sighed our genial friend, "I would make ye love the place so ye couldna leave it." I will not pretend that I think George Douglas Brown the most important Scottish novelist since Stevenson, and perhaps to say that would mean little; but his birthplace may well be proud of him for a true observer and a faithful artist. An old gray manor-house that witnessed the nuptials of two such "marshals of the world" as Knox and Claverhouse, is something, too. I may be right or I may be wrong in thinking that the man of letters who most completely and entertainingly represented British life and thought in the eighteenth century was James Boswell; but it is not with indifference that a person walking down Ochiltree street beholds fronting him Auchinleck estate, of which Bozzy was so proud and whither he led a greater man, though less readable author, than himself. In and around Ochiltree lived James Tennant and Willie Simpson and other of Burns's dearest friends, and it is by far the prettiest village in the heart of the Burns country. I remember it best as it reposed in the faint sunshine of late afternoon and on through the lingering midsummer twilight, at the home-coming of the rooks and the play-hour of door-step toddlers, when the blue smoke from a hundred cottages proclaimed that crowdie-time had come, and the croon of soft voices floated up the brae.



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"Science Revealing the Treasures of the Earth."

ABBEY'S LATEST MURAL PAINTINGS

By Royal Cortissoz

THE paintings which Mr. Abbey has recently executed for the Capitol at Harrisburg, offer strong testimony to the susceptibility of an artist to the spirit of his time. They are modern and he has hitherto lived much in the past. Indeed, it would have seemed that his imagination needed the spur of old romance before it could be exercised to good purpose. But Mr. Abbey has proved that he is a man of the world in which he lives. From Robert Herrick's fragrant and sunlit garden, in which the artist began his career, some thirty odd years ago, and from the larger but still essentially poetic motives which thereafter engaged him, he passes to the wild glare and terrible uproar of a great steel furnace in Pennsylvania. He finds nothing embarrassing in the transition. He is a twentieth-century American though he has spent so much of his life working in England on themes drawn from the earlier poets and dramatists; and he now interprets motives of modern science as sympathetically as he once limned the loveliness of Anthea and Chloris. All he asks of his new material is that it shall submit itself to his sense of beauty.

The career which led him finally to the rank of a Royal Academician has been, of course, that of a painter, but in its earlier stages it continued to embrace the activities of a draughtsman in black and white. In retracing the path he has travelled it is interesting to reflect on some of the conditions of his experience. The ambition of your brilliant illustrator is a familiar story. At the beginning he is absorbed in the task set for him by his magazine editor. Then, as he abandons the pen for the brush, he grows restless under the limitations of scale imposed upon him, and has dreams of color. The odds are that he will try to realize those dreams in excursions for which an hour is snatched now and then from his regular work. In recent years his liberation from the monotony of black and white has been facilitated by the perfecting of color processes. Editors who once were anxious for the illustrator to stick to his last to-day encourage him to make his drawings in color. In Mr. Abbey's day the color processes were unknown. The possibilities of the

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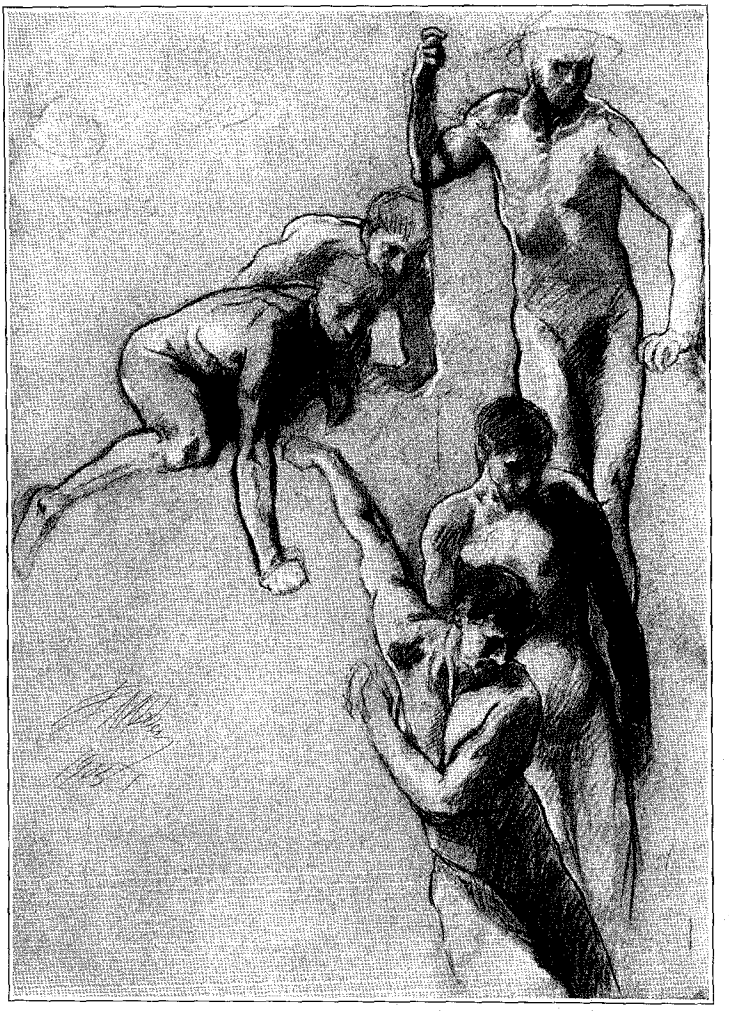
half-tone had also still to be discovered. His wash-drawings were prepared for the wood-engraver and while his linear work was reproduced in facsimile, by mechanical means, his technical development necessarily took account of influences which in most cases would have promised a sharp break in the passage to color and canvas. The illustrator who for years is only an illustrator can rarely avoid such a break. He finds it hard to make and he finds it even harder to overcome a certain prejudice in the observer. In the first moments of exhilaration over his escape from the page of a magazine he is apt to choose a canvas of goodly size for his picture, and he is more than ordinarily fortunate if his critics fail to tell him that he has only produced one of his characteristic illustrations, enlarged. The truth is that his critics generally have reason for so admonishing him. It is not only technique that counts in this matter; it is the artist's whole way of looking at things. Here is where Mr. Abbey's problem was again different from that of the typical illustrator of the present time.

Nowadays the worker in black and white is not infrequently asked to illustrate a romantic narrative which compels him to look up old backgrounds and picturesque costume; but more often he is required to



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A study for a group of figures in "Science Revealing the Treasures of the Earth."

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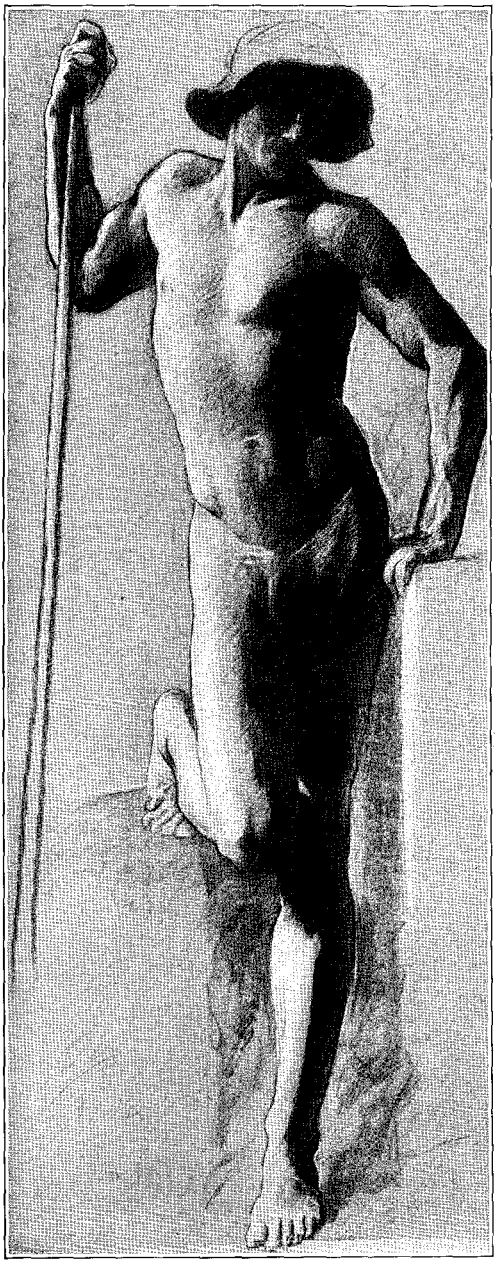
deal in actualities. Whether his manuscript be an affair of fiction or of fact it is an affair of modern life, and it encourages



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A study for one of the figures in "Science Revealing the Treasures of the Earth."

him in every way to remain in the current of modern art. He tends naturally toward realism in his drawing of the figure. In his rendering of atmosphere, of light and air, it is his own fault if he does not profit by the teachings of impressionism. Mr. Abbey worked somewhat apart from all this when he sprang into notice through his illustrations to Herrick. Nature was his model and he was curious then, as he is now, in matters of form and gesture. How keenly he sought the truth is recalled, for example, by a stormy coast scene which he drew, years ago, to be engraved in a small block—a view of "Aros, Sound of Mull." The dark cliff, frowning back upon angry breakers, and half lit by a lurid sky, with sea gulls gleaming against its sombre masses, is depicted with a breadth surprising enough in contrast to the draughtsman's ordinary drawings. But the important thing to note is that the situation in which Mr. Abbey found himself as an illustrator reacted upon him in such wise as subtly to pave the way for his achievements as a painter. It made him, above all things, a deviser of pictures. It is unfashionable for the artist to think. The young man just home from Paris and from flying visits to Haarlem and the Prado is sure of nothing if he is not sure that subject doesn't matter and that the immortality of Velasquez and Hals is to be explained on a purely technical hypothesis. Secure in the conviction that the art of the Spanish master resided in his hand and received no guidance from his brain he lives in terror lest an impulse of the imagination might clog his manual dexterity and stamp him a Philistine. Mr. Abbey has had an old-fashioned predilection for thinking about his work, and this, I believe, has been one great source of its vitality. It has steadily nourished his powers of invention. There are early drawings of his which show him as the looker-on sketching his contemporaries, but these are negligible, neither better nor worse than the average American illustrations of the late seventies and early eighties. The drawings in which he detaches himself from the rank and file are those giving graceful, pictorial form to a poet's conceits. He reads Herrick, "Upon Julia's Clothes," and straightway he sees that dame in all

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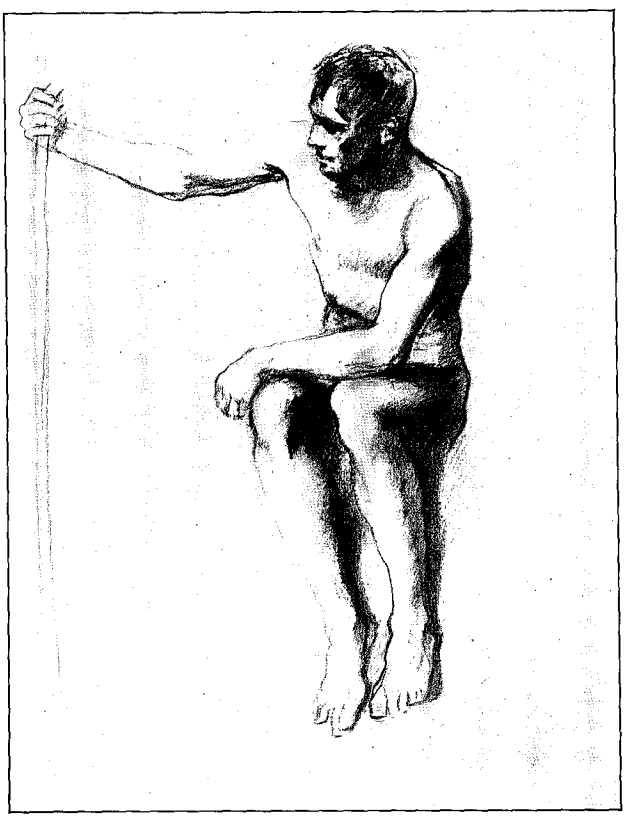
her bravery. He pictures her strolling along a leafy terrace, with an embowered old manor-house in the background, and sets her upon the page with peacock feathers suggestively, and very decoratively, filling out the border. He would disdain that drawing now, perhaps, considering it for its execution, but he could not disdain the manner in which the little composition is put together. There, in fact, was his gift. His reading always set his mind in motion. He has been something of an archæologist in his way, making careful research into the details of dress, furniture, and accessories generally, so that he might faithfully reproduce the scene described by his author. But he has found a richer inspiration in his texts. The songs of Herrick and of other lyrists, Goldsmith's great comedy, and the plays of Shakespeare, have brought out his sense of humor, quickened his interest in character, and all the time stimulated his faculty of design. His illustrations have the variety that comes from thought and the charm which comes from skill in grouping, from taste in the framing of backgrounds. They illustrate, and they are, by virtue of their originality and artistic quality, interesting apart from the text. They are, in a word, the productions of an artist who was all the time working with the brush as well as with the pen, and who accordingly treated his subject with ever-increasing breadth.



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A study for figure in "The Spirit of Vulcan."

As time went on and he expressed himself in color as the medium of his life's work, he was the better armed in that he had something to say. It was not yet anything of modern significance. He was still under the glamour of the past, a romantic yet somehow very sedate past, in which the ladies and their gallants carried themselves with discretion, displaying fine clothes rather than high emotion. There is little dramatic passion about these pictures, built up as they are from reverie. Their prevailing key is that of the well-known "Mariana," in which the Lady of the Moated Grange sits pensive amid her cushions, listening to the lute of her attendant page. For a time Mr. Abbey's figures were content with these idle employments, or were occupied a trifle more energetically, treading a stately measure as in "The Pavane," a picture of dancers on a Renaissance terrace. His mood is well represented also in the series of pastels portraying in each instance a handsome young woman voluminously robed, and posed for a purely decorative purpose. He would give his model an old musical instrument to hold, or he would place in her hand a golden dish of fruit or flowers. The final impression he left was that of an artist falling

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in love with sumptuous form and rich color and almost, if not quite, adroit enough to do justice to his feeling for these things. The simplicity of these pastels was their chief virtue. Mr. Abbey has pursued the quality ever since and it has great weight, as we shall presently see, in his Harrisburg decorations; but it has occasionally evaded him. Undue solicitude for detail in place of a broad instinct for mass has caused some of the Shakespearian subjects he has painted on a large scale to seem more like fragments of pictorial narrative than like units of design, made to stand by themselves. They have been highly effective and, by the way, it has been interesting to observe their influence upon a number of the younger British artists. In the annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy there are always several pictures obviously painted in emulation of Mr. Abbey, with a plentiful use of the reds, blacks, and whites which have characterized his palette.

On one occasion, his earlier pictorial method of painting has proved especially efficient; the Holy Grail series, running like a broad band of illumination around the walls of a room in the Boston Public Library, has precisely the atmosphere, as of an old monkish chronicle, which is called for by the artist's central idea. He wished to revive the glittering pageantry of the Arthurian legend, to put its mailed knights, its banners and all its picturesque harness into the foreground. The hint of mysticism is given at the proper moment, but the main thing is to tell the story with the almost naïve directness of a mediæval parchment, and this is done with a touch well fitted to the requirements of the room. That room is a frame, receiving the pictures in a kind of friendly intimacy. At Harrisburg Mr. Abbey was invited to exercise the functions of the mural decorator on higher grounds, not so much to fit his pictures into a frame as to make them part and parcel of a monumental whole. It was his opportunity to meet the architect half-way and to coöperate with him in completing, rather than embellishing, the lofty rotunda of a vast fabric in stone. On his long experience of picture making he has based the group of decorations I have now to describe—a group finer than anything he has ever done before, and constituting a landmark in his career.

It consists of four lunettes of heroic dimensions and as many circular panels set in the pendentives between them. They are placed midway between the drum of the great dome and the massive piers supporting the whole structure. The lunettes are recessed well back of the curving line followed by the pendentives, and the ceilings of the arches enclosing the larger paintings are richly coffered. The imposing cornice superimposed upon the piers forms a perfect base for Mr. Abbey's decorative scheme. He has been, indeed, very fortunate in his architectural environment. Classical in style, it has been handled with a due sense of dignity and no thin or frivolous details have been admitted. White marble rules below the cornice, save where the capitals are bright with gold. In the cornice itself, and in the conventional ornament on the pendentives around the artist's panels, blue is added to the arrangement of white and gold. The general effect is reposeful and cool. Mr. Abbey has made his work a very harmonious part of it. I have alluded to his predilection for red. This comes out in the present scheme but not at all obtrusively. None of his decorations has been painted to "make a hole in the wall" and none of them contains a too assertive passage.

Their subjects bring us again to the point already mentioned, the artist's success in forgetting the preoccupations of years and in expressing the essentially modern genius of his native land. He has read the history of Pennsylvania, and in these decorations he summarizes its salient chapters. The first of these, which he entitles "The Spirit of Religious Liberty," is a tribute to William Penn. He figures the pioneer's zealous venture in an ocean scene, showing us a fleet of ships advancing toward us under full sail with three white-robed wingless angels in the heavens, leading the way. Facing this the lunette called "Science Revealing Treasures of the Earth," represents a number of miners lowering themselves into the pit, while, in the background, blind Fortune, attended by figures of Peace and War, floats poised upon her wheel. The third decoration, "The Spirit of Light," celebrates the discovery of oil and its tremendous potentialities. Against a web of dark lines, formed by a number of derricks, rises a crowd of aerial

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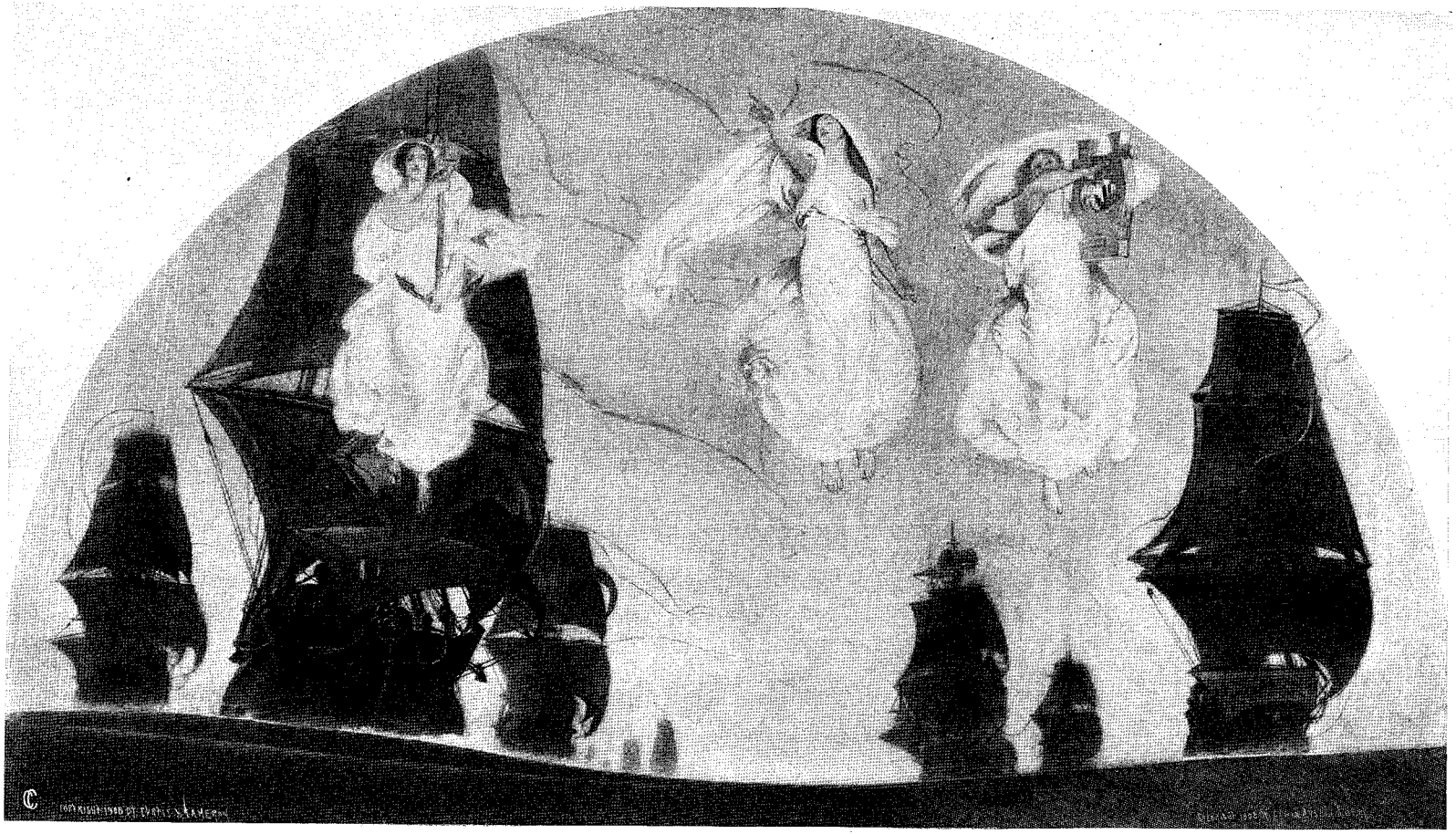

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"The Spirit of Religious Liberty."

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figures lifting upon their finger-tips small but brilliant flames. In "The Spirit of Vulcan" Mr. Abbey depicts the interior of a steel foundry, with the brawny god looking down upon the labors which have contributed so much to the prosperity of the State. In these lunettes the artist presents specifically tangible elements in Pennsylvanian progress. In the pendentives his medallions are dedicated to the great forces of civilization at large, to Religion, Law, Art, and Science, embodying each motive in a single figure with appropriate accessories and spreading an inscription over each golden background.

The foregoing brief summary will have made it plain that Mr. Abbey has had, as always, something to say. Many episodes in the history of Pennsylvania might have yielded him suggestive material, many scenes involving famous personages and giving opportunity not only for portraiture but for drama. In choosing themes of a certain impersonal significance, however, he secured the grandeur indispensable to monumental art and, at the same time, was faithful to the interests of humanity. The ideal of religious liberty symbolized in the first of his paintings is no unsubstantial theory, academically expressed; the hearts of men are behind the straining timbers of the ships that come bravely on to a new shore. The natural forces treated in the remaining lunettes are those which in this country, and most emphatically in Pennsylvania, have enlisted the taming energies of a whole people. The church, and then coal, oil, and steel—these things have made Penn's Commonwealth, and in going to them for his ideas Mr. Abbey has ranked himself with those mural decorators of his time who are in the van. He is their comrade, too, where the technical solution of problems of the sort is concerned.

The modern mural painter is hard put to it to reconcile the immemorial claims of decorative tradition and the methods of the schools in which he is trained. His composition must be well balanced, but if, with this in mind, he follows too closely the classical formulæ of the old masters, he is sorely apt to be stilted and uninteresting. Everybody knows the banality of the modern figure of The Arts, say, enthroned in the middle of a lunette like some matronly acrobat, embarrassed by unaccustomed garments but bent upon keeping herself at the precise centre of the canvas. The gesture of the figure on her right is repeated in the reverse direction by the figure on her left. Thus, the artist holds the scales even to the extreme limits of his canvas, and the decoration remains absolutely lifeless. But what if he uses the naturalism which he would otherwise practise? If he tries to vitalize his decoration as he would a casual note from nature, will the result not be equally out of place? It is hard to find the middle course, but it is there, as men like Besnard have shown, and Mr. Abbey has found it. The Harrisburg decorations are admirably "centred," but not through academic pedantry. He gains his end by a right adjustment of masses, by a discreet arrangement of colors as well as of forms.

This is manifest at once when the observer enters the main portal on the east side of the building and is confronted by "The Spirit of Religious Liberty," far up on the western wall. There is no crassly fixed centre here, but the design is beautifully unified. Across the bottom of it stretches a narrow strip of deep blue sea. Narrow as it is it has enormous weight; smoothly but irresistibly you feel the pressure of an illimitable body of water. The foam rises, subtly suggesting the deep snore of the sea itself, under the forefoot of the nearest vessel. The ocean moves, it is alive with its color, its sound, and its sharp, salt smell. Mr. Abbey has done nothing truer or more artistic than he has done here, painting the sea as it is and at the same time making it a sort of pedestal for the intensely decorative ships that tower above it. The broad sails relieve the dark hulls with breadths of tawny red. Something of their glow faintly flushes with rose the white draperies of the three celestial guides. Back of it all is a cloudless sky, vague, opalescent, spacious. Filled with the large airs of the open sea, eloquent of the wide horizons faced by the founder and his people, is this beautiful painting, a work to touch the imagination with a sense of an old hope gloriously fulfilled. And, withal, the lunette falls into its place as naturally, with as much of architectural balance, as though its component parts had been mathematically assembled.

The same well-pondered construction

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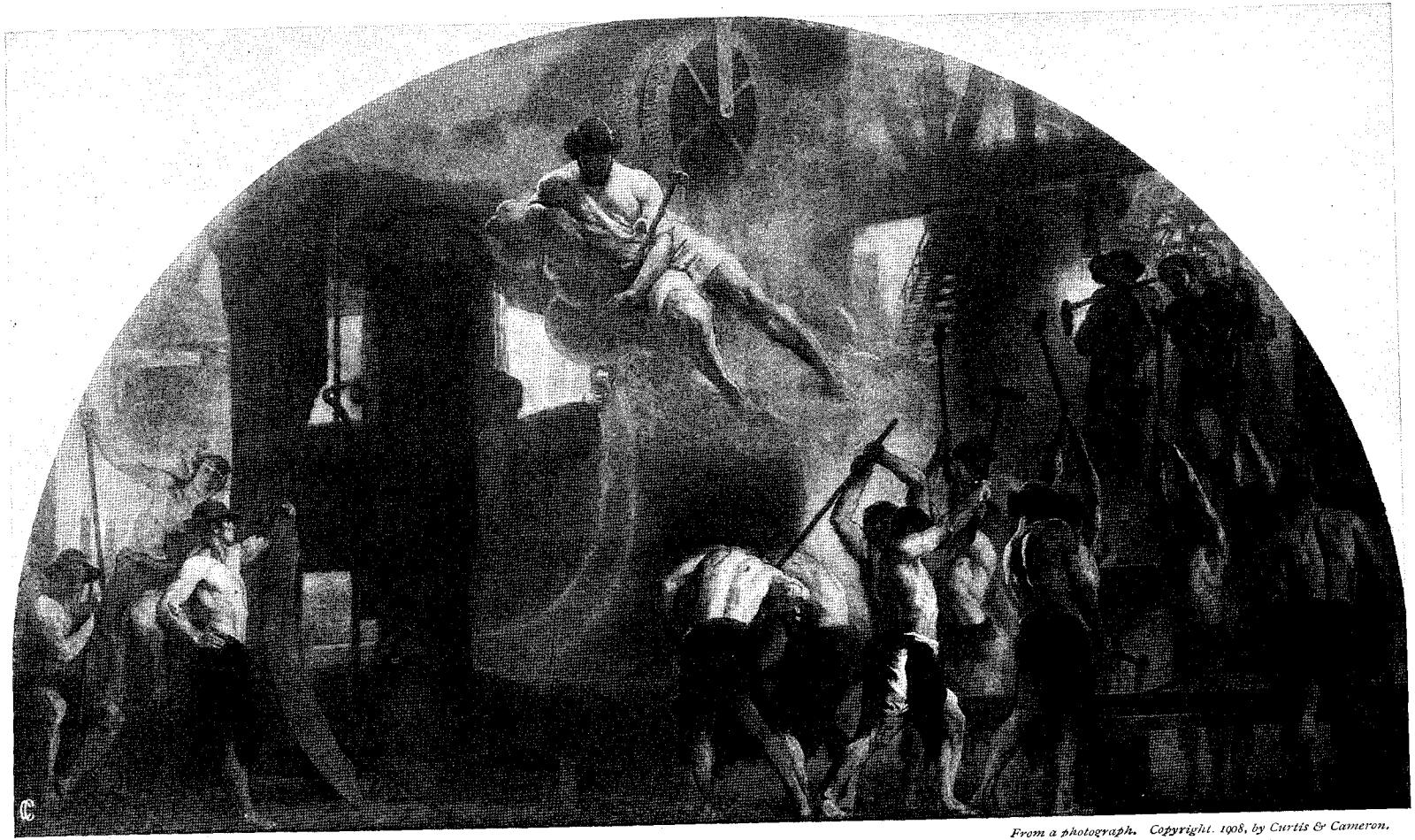

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"The Spirit of Vulcan."

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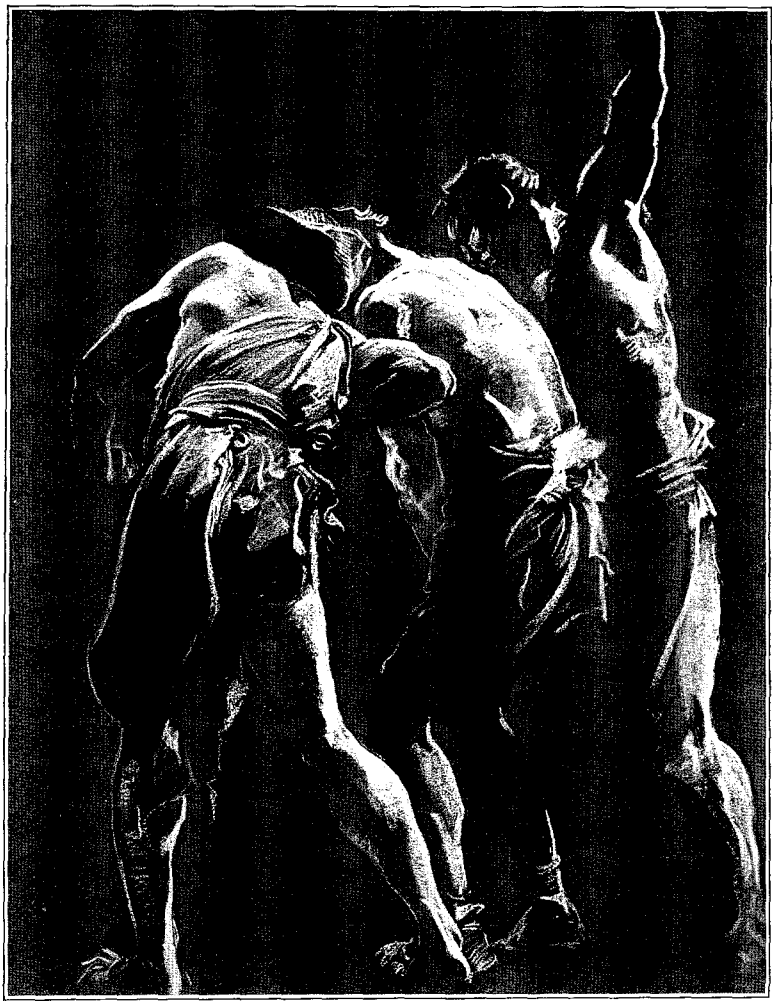
marks the eastern lunette, "Science Revealing Treasures of the Earth." The red earth itself provides the firm foundation in this case, synthetized, like the sea in the other, into a simple, broad mass. The deep fissures in it are only dimly discerned. artless creatures, obviously the builders of a new world, eager upon the scent of discovery. Whether intentional or not the treatment of the tree-trunks behind them is singularly suggestive in view of the allegorical figures filling the upper part of the



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A study for a group of figures in "The Spirit of Vulcan."

The miners are descending warily into unknown depths and, accordingly, these are enveloped in the gloom of mystery. The practically nude bodies of the workmen are not painted in too high relief. These delvers are coming close to Mother Earth with primitive toil and their skins are subdued in color to the stuff they work in. One is aware of them as stalwart yet young and canvas on the other side. The russet-winged goddess of Fortune in her red robe, drifting over the abyss between Peace and War with their thin floating draperies respectively of blue and white, looms against a bright sky like a phantom out of the pagan mythology. She sets the mind momentarily on thoughts of classical antiquity, and, keyed to this mood, the bare tree-

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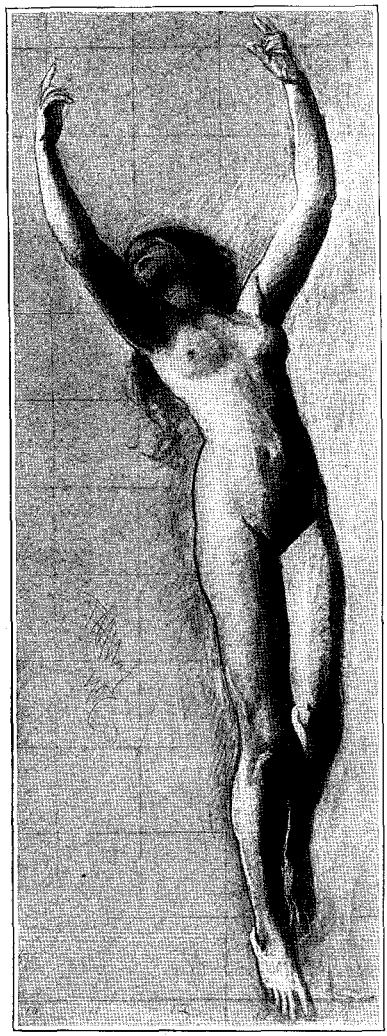

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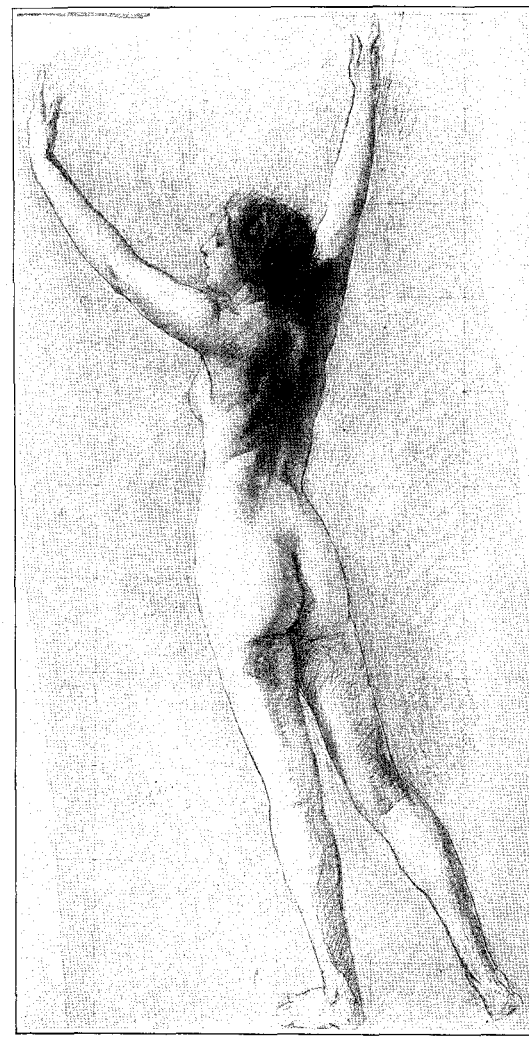
Study for one of the figures in "The Spirit of Light."

trunks raise a fleeting memory of some pillared Greek temple. Between these natural columns you catch glimpses of distant blue hills. The air seems very still. The explorers work as in a breathless wonder, tense with the excitement of uncovering a precious secret in one of the silent places of the world. Both in this and in the decoration traversed above, Mr. Abbey links his design with the deeds of the men who made Pennsylvania, and generalizes his theme so that it has a wider scope. He lifts his local allusion to the plane of his purpose as the collaborator of the architect.

The northern and southern lunettes, conceived with equal imaginative grasp, are, nevertheless designed in such wise as to bring more realistically home to us a sense of what Pennsylvania is doing to-day with the liberty sought in those red-sailed ships and with the treasures wrung from the earth. The hammer-wielding god in "The Spirit of Vulcan" wears his scanty blue garment after the careless fashion of the Olympians and his ruddy limbs and shoulders rest appropriately in cloudy billows. But he broods over the scene less as a



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Study for one of the figures in "The Spirit of Light."

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poetic figure than as the mentor and friend of the very human toilers beneath him. He seems, in very truth, the genius of the amazing chamber in which he finds himself, a place of giant machinery, dark, fantastic and forbidding, of molten metal and eddying vapors, of grimy, sweating men who are children of this generation, but who, at their mighty task, wear, somehow, a grander, more elemental air. The management of the color in this decoration is superb, the prevailing darkness of the machinery being relieved to just the right extent by the warm flesh tints of the smiths, the glow of the flaming steel, the pearly tones of the shifting steam and the touch of lovely blue in Vulcan's tunic. But one dwells also with special appreciation on the modelling and draughtsmanship which the artist has brought to the portrayal of his figures. The linear habit proper to his illustrations made with the pen, and subsequently hinted, if not actually disclosed, in some of his paintings, is here conclusively abandoned. The figures are seen in the round and are so painted, freely and boldly, with close research into movement, the play of muscle and the swiftly changing effects of light and shade. Nor has the painter's interest in detail distracted him unduly. He fuses his details into one moving vision.

Up to this point Mr. Abbey has worked, so to say, on safe ground. In his fourth lunette, he lets himself go in rather audacious vein. Baldly stated on paper, the idea of a company of light-bearers rushing up into the air, past the prosaic timbers raised above a number of oil-wells, hardly commends itself as suitable for a great mural decoration. It all depends, of course, upon how the thing is done. Mr. Abbey does it with success by concentrating his attention upon the inherent picturesqueness of his subject. He sees that subject against a dark sky, the deep blue of which is broken by rifts of gold. With such a background the black tracery of his derricks takes on a new aspect; it is no longer prosaic but, on the contrary, positively romantic. One thinks of the tall chimneys on Thames side which turned into campanili under Whistler's eyes. The derricks have something bizarre about them; beneath the shadow of those ghostly towers, almost anything might happen, and there is, after all, not audacity alone, but, in some sort, an inevitableness in the sudden upward flight of the "Spirits of Light," golden-haired, ivory tinted goddesses, swathed in diaphanous blue, and coming like exhalations from the deeps. The maze of their floating figures, all softness and grace, would lose half its value against a neutral background. The needed contrast, the element to make the balance true, comes from the rigid lines of the derricks. The eye rests upon this lunette with the same contentment as upon its companions.

If the four have, as it were, a common vitality, expressed in the same terms, their decorative integrity, as of work growing out of the construction of the walls, is in part supported by the medallions in the pendentives. These unite while they divide the canvases to which they are subordinate. They are necessary members of the scheme, embracing Mr. Abbey's zone of the rotunda in one chord of color. In them he has sought to create four episodes of design without so far emphasizing them as to give them an independent existence. To this end he causes the figures to stand out against golden backgrounds so that each medallion counts vividly in the ensemble, but none of these personifications is invested with too complicated a meaning. Religion, clad in the white robe of innocence and treading under foot the dragon of evil, stands with arms uplifted between her altar and the torch with which she passes on the sacred flame. Law, in heavy red habiliments, is blindfolded, but she, too, has conquered the enemy at her feet. In one hand she bears the scales and in the other a sword. The owl of wisdom perches on the wrist of Science, whose right hand holds the lightning. The serpent coiled beneath the hem of her garment lifts its head above her knee. Her face is veiled. Religion and Law are tall, solemn, hieratic figures. Science is made more human. She is the most beautiful of the four. Her robes are bewitching in color, agleam with the deep greens of the emerald and the hues of a dark Egyptian scarab. The figure of Art is, somewhat surprisingly, the least pleasing of them all. It is statuesque; the laurel-crowned head and the columnar throat have a certain sculptural distinction, but the figure as a whole leaves a rather meagre impression which is only deepened by the insignificance of the accessories and the cold reds and greens in the draperies.

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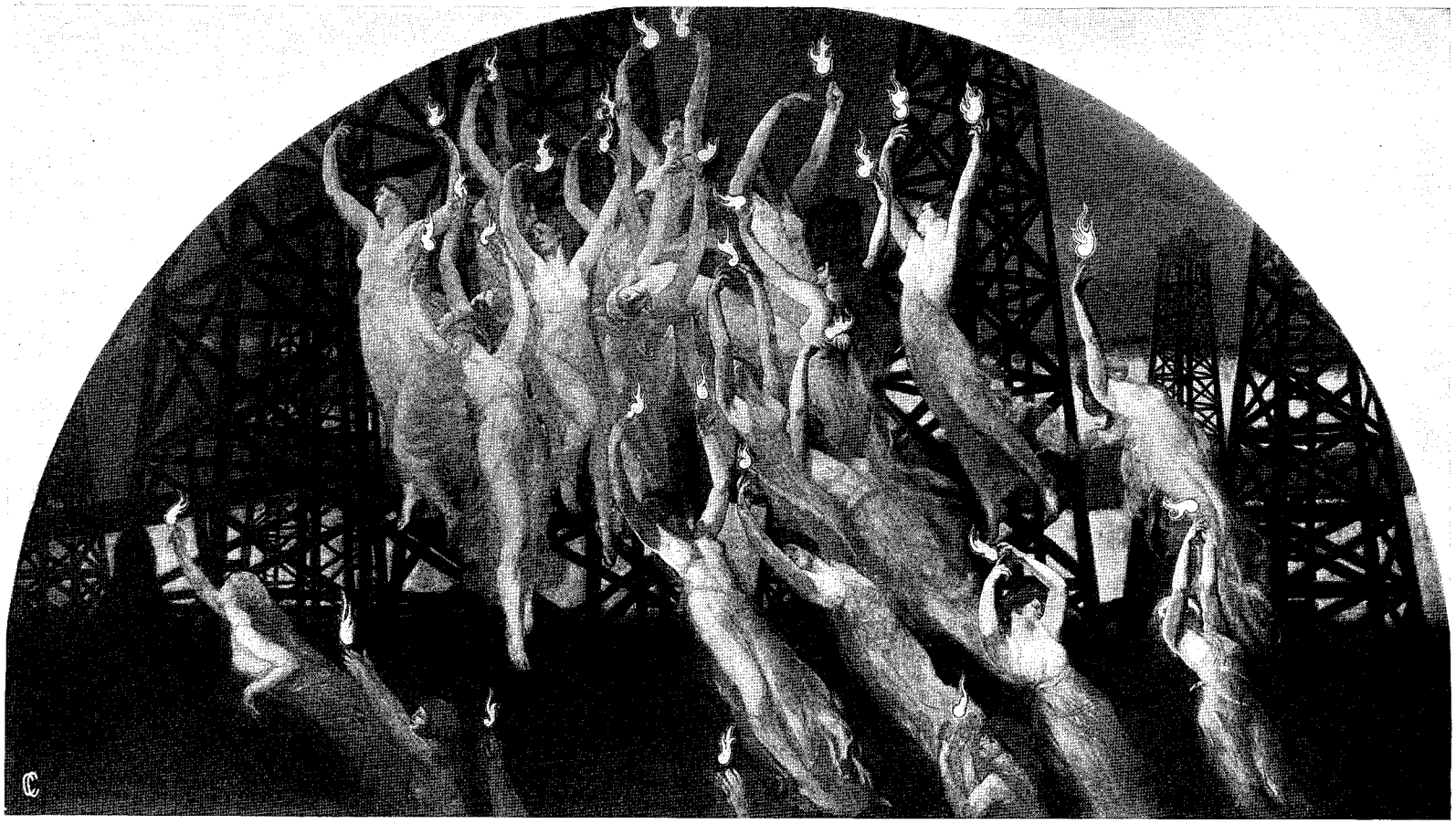

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"The Spirit of Light."

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All of the medallions suffer a little from the manner in which the inscriptions have been introduced into the background. The breaking up of the words ends by teasing the eye with a sense of unrelated letters. On the other hand, these inscriptions have been kept in so low a key with reference to the gold behind them that after one's first impulse of impatience they are summarily ignored and the medallions are observed in their broad relation to the lunettes and the architecture.

When all is said, it is, in fact, the swift, sweeping view of Mr. Abbey's decorations that imposes the severest test. How do they bear the scrutiny that takes little, if any, account of their meaning but looks simply to their organic fitness in the place in which they are fixed? They bear it triumphantly and, what is more, they will not let you neglect their meaning. That is because Mr. Abbey has perfectly balanced substance and form. His idea in each decoration is set forth with simplicity. There is no surplusage as there is no obscurity. In the same moment in which you apprehend the beauty he has put into his designs, beauty of form, color, and composition, you realize his thought. It is important to observe, too, that he has placed his scheme in the right perspective. It is interesting to study it from the successive galleries which, at the topmost stage, permit it to be pretty closely examined. But it is seen at its best from the pavement, when the beholder is thinking of no single detail in the rotunda, but surveys at a glance all that lies within his line of vision. At that moment Mr. Abbey's decorations seem to him as necessary to the building as the giant piers around him or the floor on which he stands.

"Science."

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THE USES OF DIPLOMACY

By Katharine Holland Brown

ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. WALTER TAYLOR

IT was a family proverb among the Burford relatives, to the farthermost permutations and combinations, that the Fairy Godmothers had not only gathered around Lydia Burford's cradle, but had fought around it, for the privilege of lavishing all their rosy benisons upon the curly brown head of the small inheritor. This saying gained its earliest warrant when, at fourteen, left orphaned, without even means for an education, her Great-aunt Augusta Crowninshield had suddenly descended from Brookline, as from the celestial cloud of Homeric fable, and had taken providential command of the little girl's forlorn affairs. (Lydia's mother was a Crowninshield only twice removed, although her father belonged to an unknown race from Baltimore.) The tradition was further justified when, throughout the series of impeccable schools which Aunt Augusta's severe beneficence granted, she was reckoned not only the cleverest but the most winsome pupil of all their rosebud gardens. The maxim was again quoted, with enthusiasm, when at eighteen she stood in white against the majestical background of bygone Crowninshields by Copley and Smibert, and made her adorable curtsey to Aunt Augusta's majestical black-walnut world, by which she was pronounced the most charming débutante of the year. It voiced yet stronger assurance when, at twenty-two she amazed and delighted not only Aunt Augusta's sovereign universe, but a certain discerning element in outside spheres as well, by her completely bewitching small novel, "The Romany Torch." And it swelled into a very pæan of triumph when, at twenty-four, she was married to Bronson Wolcott.

Lydia herself took her boundless golden fortunes very calmly. Even the applause that greeted her book did not bewilder nor exalt her. She realized demurely that being twenty-two and a Crowninshield niece might have some bearing upon even the chaste exaltation of her literary fame. But Bronson she never learned to take so calmly. He was altogether too splendid to be true. It was not alone the outward man, the things visible, concerning which the Burford permutations so exulted, that thus overwhelmed her; his superb personality, his balance and his poise, his sweeping success at every tourney of life. Rather, it was the things invisible: the mingled strength and fineness of his nature; his broad sight; his kind unswerving judgments; now and then a glimpse of certain heights and depths which left her abashed and silent, hardly believing that she, little ordinary Lydia Burford, could be beloved by such a man.

A Burford cousin once remarked that Lydia's life was less a life than a play, a flying succession of dramatic scenes. Lydia had retorted that it bore even more resemblance to a kinetoscope. The year of her marriage, especially, seemed in retrospect so unreal, bore so bewilderingly the aura of enchantment, that she could look back on those fleeting weeks with an odd detached interest, as placidly as if they visioned forth the romance of a stranger. Yet she cherished every gleaming sparkle of remembrance; each one a pearl upon her hidden rosary.

To Lydia, her real life began on that first magical twilight; an April twilight, of gray mist, and fog-dimmed surf, and dim, white, wind-blown stars. All day she had played her amiable laborious rôle as youngest guest at the soul-wearying Russell house party. She had wound yarn for Aunt Augusta, she had played billiards with the Major; she had sung ballads for sentimental Miss Abby, and pounded rag-time for that spirited octogenarian, Mrs. Sears. These and many other tasks she met, with her unfailing merry interest. But late that afternoon, as she stood crisp and sweet at the tea-table, assisting Mrs. Russell at that interminable dreary function, a sudden pulse of revolt swept every nerve. She poured the last cup with steady hands, then drifted aimlessly to the long French window, half open. There she surveyed the field. Major Chandler was hot-foot on the trail of the Battle of Chancellorsville. Mrs.

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Drawn by F. Walter Taylor.

Bronson tested the trellis with a strong grip.—Page 673.

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Atterbury held the rest of the roomful with the impassioned tragedies of her five last cooks. No one had glanced her way.

Lydia drew the sharp breath of reckless resolve. The French window gave not even a betraying creak as she slid through to the velvet grass below.

Down she ran, across the shadowy gardens, then through the deep screen of pines to the long white star-lit beach beyond. The April night welcomed her with laughing gusts, with cool gay misty kisses: she raced to meet it like a colt, her curly head flung high, her slim, splendid young body prancing with the rapture of escape. Her muslin skirts were drabbled with wet, her thin little shoes soaked through. She pelted on recklessly, perfectly aware that, should Aunt Augusta ever learn of this, she would pay to the uttermost farthing for her wild freak, perfectly resigned to pay, "But I'll have my run first," she called rebelliously to the white scandalized birch copse, as she fled past. The wind grew fresher: Lydia turned to it, hands outstretched, her round cheeks paled for sheer delight. The night breathed in her throat, beat through her veins, shone in her rapturous eyes. As she stood there, inhaling it, living it, she might have been a runaway dryad, sister to the whispering poplars on the knoll behind.

Finally she stopped for breath. This tiny oak thicket marked the estate boundary. She was a mile from the house; it was almost night; already the household might miss her. Her truant frolic veered to swift misgiving. She must hurry back, and dress for dinner. At this moment, Aunt Augusta might be rapping petulantly at her door.

Thereat her dryad humor dropped from her like a cloak. She turned and fled, taking the shortest way, a woods path, to the foot of the avenue. Up the avenue, it would be a short half-mile to the house.

Just as she emerged into the open driveway, the great gates clashed shut. The station wagon, returning from the last train, rolled through. Lydia, startled and keenly embarrassed, shrank back against the hedge, hoping to pass unnoticed. But in her white dress she stood lined sharp as a statue against the black trees. She heard an astonished exclamation. The carriage stopped. Bronson Wolcott sprang out, and came toward her.

"Miss Lydia? Out for a stroll?" Even in the twilight she could discern the surprised lift of his fine gray head, his puzzled kindly smile. Poor Lydia, pounced on like a runaway baby, stared up at him in dumb chagrin. She knew Wolcott only as the most impressive guest of all this impressive household. She stood in childish awe of him, his great attainments, his stately presence. To be caught at all in this absurd unconventional trick was bad enough. But to be caught by this cool smiling prince of perfectness! She clutched her dishevelled hair, pulled twenty ways by snatching evergreen twigs, with trembling hands.

"I—I just ran away for some air," she faltered. "The others don't know——"

"What they're missing?" finished Wolcott, with a friendly laugh. Apparently it was his usual fortune to be met at the gates by a breezy fellow-guest in flying braids and tempestuous petticoats. "I'm famished for a mouthful of air, myself," he went on. "May I walk up the avenue, too? Thank you. James, you need not wait."

He fell into step beside Lydia, talking of the day in town, so easily that Lydia felt at once reassured and yet more awed. From the godlike Wolcott, this was not only courtesy, but chivalry. However, with every casual word, the situation became more commonplace. But half-way on their decorous road, the April night took a hand in affairs, and without warning. Not even a breeze, a darkening of the sky, foretold that swift, sheeted flood of fragrant rain.

"By Jove, we'll be drenched through!" Wolcott pulled Lydia into the hedge shelter, and flung his coat around her shoulders. Lydia threw it back at him.

"Put it on yourself," she retorted. "Who minds a sprinkle like this? Oh-h!" as a wreath of lightning crinkled across the sky, "It's going to pour, truly! Let's run for it!"

Then she stopped, paralyzed by her own audacity. But Wolcott had seized her hand.

"All right. One—two—three—Go!"

All her wild outdoor mood flashed through Lydia. Hand in hand, like impish boy and girl, they raced up the long drive, stumbling, splashing, breathless with laughter. The rain beat in their faces, the merry spring thunder rolled and shouted, the rollicking wind screamed like an impudent school-boy in their ears. They fled across the soaked turf to the garden front, then

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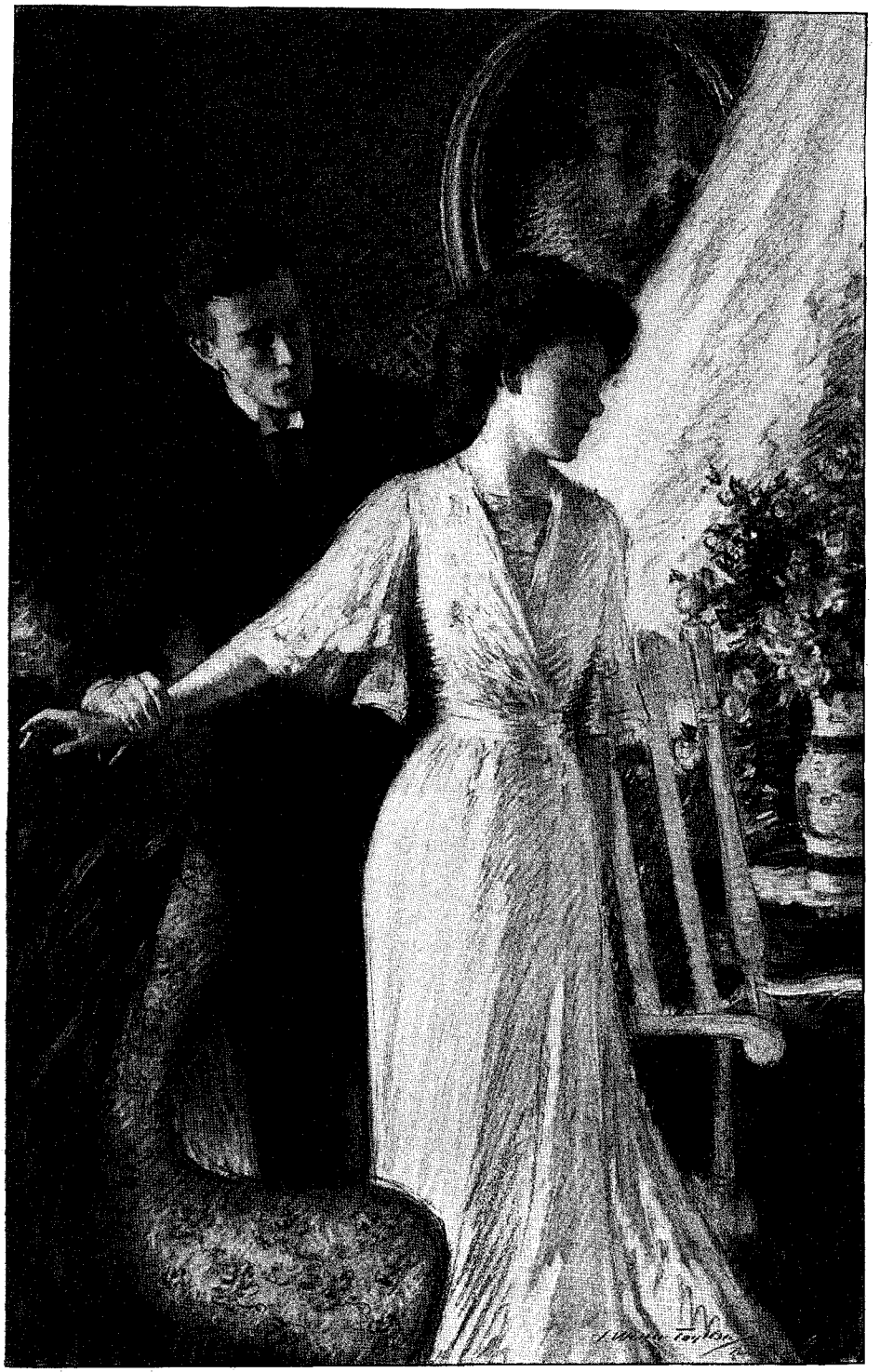

Drawn by F. Walter Taylor.

"Something else troubles you, I know."—Page 680.

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stopped and viewed each other in the dusk, two sheepish conspirators. Bronson, athlete that he was, was puffing and crimson. His collar was melted, his clothes soaked and dripping. Lydia clasped despairing hands over her unspeakable hair.

"We'll never dare face Them looking like this!" gasped Lydia. Bronson considered her with dancing eyes.

"We do look rather desperate characters," he admitted. He glanced at the terrace, then at the stout iron rose trellis which masked the blank wall beyond. Its top round came flush with the second-floor windows, already softly alight.

"Which is your window, Miss Lydia?"

"The narrow bay—*Oh!* Can you help me climb up? *Will* you?" Lydia fairly danced in wild unreasoning hope. "Oh, please, please!"

"We'll try for it." Bronson tested the trellis with a strong grip. His deep voice shook with strangled laughter. For the moment he looked as young, as mischievous as the girl herself, swept out of his stately orbit by his romping race, by the mad April wind, the smell of wet wakening earth, by Lydia's lovely face of pleading and dismay. "Is your window unlocked? Wide open? Good! I'll help you up, then I'll present myself at the proper entrance. Everybody knows my eccentric preference for walking up from the station. If just they haven't missed you——"

"And if just they don't catch me scrambling up the trellis, and shoot me for a burglar——"

Wolcott choked.

"In that case, they'll have to shoot me, too, as an accomplice. Come!"

He hurried her up the terrace, then lifted her lightly to the first round. Steadied by his grasp, she reached the second, the third: then, with a quick boyish spring, she swung into her wide-open window. She was just in time. As her foot touched the floor, Aunt Augusta's high tones floated over the transom.

"Lydia! *Lydia!* Why do you not answer when I rap? I am almost ready to go downstairs. Make haste!"

At dinner, Bronson, dignified and serene beside the hostess, had hardly a glance for Lydia. He carried the conversation with his usual ease. Lydia, still bubbling with the fun of adventure, dared not even look his way.

The next day indoors proved even more trying than its predecessor. Aunt Augusta had a headache, which meant linked discomfort, long drawn out, for her immediate associates. At four o'clock, she settled for a nap. Again Lydia fled to her beach, feverish for the comfort of her out-of-doors.

It was a still, wistful day, with none of yesterday's hoyden frolic, but full of a dear appeal. She walked on and on, soothed by the gray peace of the brooding sky. As she rounded a great bowlder, singing softly to herself, she came face to face with Bronson Wolcott.

"This time, it's with malice aforethought," he explained, gayly. "I took an earlier train from town, meaning to coax you for a drive. But this is better, isn't it?" His dark laughing glance challenged her. "Now what particular misdemeanor shall we commit to-day? Last night, housebreaking; to-night—say, piracy? Here's old Tarr's dory. Shall we row to Baker's Island and back before dinner? Dare we try?"

Lydia, radiant, could hardly wait to reply. She scrambled into the dory, and helped him push off. Wolcott's face, boyish with pleasure, reflected her delight. Comrade truants, they exulted in every stolen moment. First the long row across the waveless silvered water to the island, that far deserted heap of amber sand; then back, through a sunset fog-dimmed, yet blazing with strange magician's fires. Last, the hurried tramp home through glimmering dusk, the cold salt gusts carrying them like wings, the leaping flash of the lighthouse signalling them across the yellow twilight shore.

"This will be quite all of it," Lydia remarked severely, next morning, as she watched Wolcott drive away. His visit with the Russells was ended. From the city he would go to Washington for a long, important stay. "You may meet him in town every day for the rest of your natural life, but he'll always be the magnificent Bronson Wolcott, lawyer, clubman, Pillar of Society. He'll always remember that he's grown up. He'll never forget, and be just a nice boy again. Requiescat!"

The week dragged for Lydia. She found herself counting the days till her return to ordered hours and duties in Aunt Augusta's

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home. On the eighth night after Bronson's departure, her growing restlessness became a torture. She faced the long dinner with bright endurance. She chattered gayly through two endless hours at the Major's cribbage-board. Then she slipped away, out on the dark east gallery.

It was a clear, chill night, all pulsing with hurrying spring. A white April moon peered through the half-leaved branches. Now and then a wakeful bird-note drifted to her ear. She stood there a long time, a gray wraith against the great vine-bound pillar. She felt the fog-damp on her bare throat, its creeping touches on her hands. Her eyes grew very wide and black: her slender body leaned, listening. Presently her aunt's voice rang out, wondering impatiently where she could have disappeared. For once her dutiful spirit would not turn back. She knew herself summoned by a more imperative command. And at last a dark figure crossed the lawn, and strode up the steps to her side.

"I knew you would be here," said Bronson, curtly. For a moment he looked at her without further speech. His lean high-bred face bore a curious expression: neither greeting nor tenderness: merely the still intent surprise of one who finds himself suddenly, incredibly, face to face with the visible realization of some mysterious long-sought dream.

"I wanted you," said Lydia, looking up at him with grave eyes. In the moonlight, she saw him whiten to his steady lips. She put out her hands to him, trembling. They stood and looked at each other, dulled by the shock of revelation, awed like two children before the inscrutable face of joy.

"I know," said Bronson, in his brusque voice. He gave her no word of love. But as she leaned to his voice, he caught her two hands to his breast, then lifted her and swept her into his hard, silent grasp.

Four months afterward they were married, after a betrothal like a hurtling race of dreams. During those weeks they were together so little, their stolen hours of comradeship were so rare, that when Lydia stood beside him, before the rose-wreathed altar, and heard her solemn adjurations, she owned a panic-smitten longing to call a halt, to beg reprieve, "Just till we can catch up and get acquainted."

Later, she confided her apprehensions to Bronson. "And, Bronson, I never will catch up with you," she added, her face shadowing against her laughter. "I'll never be clever enough to keep step. I'll be poor Alice Through the Looking-Glass, forever running for dear life, just to keep standing still."

Bronson looked at her steadily. Before his glance, her own eyes quivered and fell.

"Personally, I shall be quite content to have you stand still—precisely as you are," said he.

To Lydia, the months that followed joined in a grim conspiracy to prove her forecast. She was forever running for dear life, to keep up; and for all her panting efforts, she could only struggle along at Bronson's heels. To be the wife of a Salem Wolcott, she soon discerned, meant quite as arduous an undertaking as to be the wife of Bunker Hill Monument. Her elaborate new obligations, at first so many exciting playthings, soon irked and harassed her, for she realized that her performance of them reflected even more glaringly upon Bronson than upon herself. She must be the real princess, always, the head of Bronson's magnificent establishment, the regal chatelaine. Yet for all her eager pains, she felt herself often but an awkward Cinderella. And she had all the normal woman's passionate desire to efface her own personality in that of the man she loved, to spend herself in aiding his ends. But in Bronson's life, all was so finished, so symmetrical! What could remain for her to do? She could not even improve upon his household arrangements. That realization brought its special prick. Nowhere did she feel the subtle differences of her new environment more keenly than in the exasperating parallels which she was forever drawing between the conditions of her earlier life and her life to-day. Sometimes these quaint disparities teased and burdened her. Again, they would be screamingly funny. Bronson's quiet "There will be five for dinner, Jacobs," and the butler's deferential "Yes, sir," brought before her, a flashlight view, the tragicomedies of her childhood, in her dull Southern village home. She recalled the awful note of preparation when long-dreaded guests were imminent; the toil of polishing windows and mending curtains; the aching hours spent on her knees darning the frayed

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stair-carpet, that the returned missionary or the Sunday-School delegate might not trip his reverend heels therein; the last wild panic of preparation, when, inevitably, some cataclysm engulfed all their distracted efforts, and the perfidy of the butter-woman, the salt overturned in the ice-cream, worse, the hopeless toughness of the festal chicken, would drive her pretty worried mother to anguished tears, and her kindly futile father to futile maddening sympathy. Against the polished surface of her life to-day, its planned exquisite order, these raw recollections held grotesque significance. Her own life had been all fretting fragmentary detail; Bronson's, a straight smooth road, with not one obstacle to break his course. What wonder that he should take life in his stride? That she should, inevitably, stumble along at his heels?

Late that winter, Bronson was summoned to Washington, for the twentieth time, in consultation upon a troublesome minor treaty. That was not surprising. He was already quoted as an authority upon international law. The following month, when he was named envoy extraordinary to confer with certain noted jurists in Paris upon a famous war indemnity, Brookline listened with unruffled calm. It was no great honor for a Salem Wolcott. Bronson was merely upholding family tradition. Probably the Court of St. James would be his next field. Bronson would quite honor the post. Equally, agreed popular opinion, equally would Lydia.

Lydia did not overhear this reassuring judgment. That was a pity; for she certainly needed both reassurance and consolation. If the first weeks of her marriage had brought her pure rapture, the months following had brought her pure dismay. She had always met life half-way, breezily, daringly; but deep in her Puritan nature lay a stratum of self-distrust, the product of the tortuous self-analyses, the morbid spiritual struggles, of her forbears. Heretofore she had gone unaware of its presence: but now the swift current of her new life had worn its way to the depths. Moreover, she had made certain bewildering discoveries. . . . She loved Bronson terribly. . . . Marriage had always appeared to her a dignified and a desirable estate of life. She now discerned that it could be heaven or hell, but seldom the placid middle ground of her guileless imaginings. She groped and fumbled, all thumbs, at its locked mysteries. Against its great current of Reality, she felt, as she grimly assured herself, like a paper doll afloat in a chip boat.

And her inadequateness to her exacting new vocation had been driven home by twenty invisible needle-thrusts of mishap. She had flung herself heart and soul into the winter's demands, gowns, charities, friendships. Yet she had achieved nothing for Bronson. She had held her own, perhaps; no more. She felt herself a failure, a drag on Bronson's winged triumphs. She was all pretence; the winter's tests had proved it. Any really clever woman would have known how to supplement Bronson's interests. She herself might do for an hour's romance. But for the wife of such as Bronson, for a king!

All these grieved self-upbraidings, however, were for the times when Bronson was away from her. When he came back to her, she promptly forgot all her uncertainties in the one golden certainty that he was with her, and all was right in her world. But Bronson was seldom with her. And her self-distrust grew until it clouded every hour.

When Bronson, then in Washington, received his appointment on the Commission, his first eager telegram was for Lydia, to accompany him. Lydia bloomed at the thought. She had missed him piteously. All her dim forebodings had reared monstrous heads. But now! Yet even as she plumed herself upon this snatched victory, there came alarming summons from Aunt Augusta. She was gravely ill at the Nahant place. Lydia must come at once.

Lydia went. Aunt Augusta's seizure proved but slight. However, Lydia must remain with her, she insisted. Gratitude as well as duty commanded the sacrifice, for Aunt Augusta had been a second mother to her. However, as Lydia rebelliously whispered, what she wanted just now was not mothers, but husbands. Still, her crushing disappointment gave her no warrant to spoil Bronson's one evening with her, between Washington and Paris. Therefore she girded herself for the fray. And she was so unflinchingly merry, so casual and so gay, that Bronson went from her

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oddly puzzled. Perhaps a bit sore at heart too.

Had Bronson known how cruelly Lydia hungered for him, how grave her need, he would have carried her off with small regard for her filial cares. But Bronson, queerly enough, possessed like Lydia his layer of self-distrust. Rather, it was a black drop, which tinctured all his inner life. His powerful and far-reaching successes, his lofty standing, his bold dominant personality—all these were but the husk, the outer shell, put on like so much armor. The inward man, the real Bronson, was as sensitive, as keenly, morbidly self-analytical, as the outer man was poised and self-assured. He weighed his own motives without pity. He stood off and judged his life with almost bitter clarity of vision. And on no part of his life did he look with more merciless scrutiny than upon its romance. His love for Lydia held a father's protecting tenderness. She seemed to him infinitely younger than himself, infinitely appealing, a being dazzling, crystalline, adorable. He was passionately proud of her, her beauty, her girlish cleverness, her spirit. Yet she made him feel himself all his years, and more. He could never quite share alike with her. He could never quite step back into her radiant morning. True, on that April night he had crossed the barrier of years and had stood beside her: they had been boy and girl, together. But that was only the moment's soaring rapture, his one supreme exquisite hour. The years were there, implacable, insurmountable. His hour could never strike again.

Sometimes he questioned whether in his compelling passion he had dealt fairly by Lydia. She had been such a child. She had given all, unquestioning, so royally! He would have been more generous to have turned away from her dear presence, to have disowned her lovely witchery. Youth called to youth, not to staid years. Surely, he had not been fair with her. . . .

Throughout the sea voyage and the long days that followed, these harsh perplexities wove their poisoned web through Bronson's tired mind. Perhaps, in his desolate musings, Bronson needed Lydia quite as forlornly as Lydia needed him.

The negotiations dragged. The treaty was a Jack-Horner's pie, and the various Powers took much unction in putting in thumbs and in pulling out plums. June passed: the agreement still hung fire; July, August; and Bronson chafed to reach his wife with an eagerness which mounted to panic. However, Lydia's letters continued reassuring, even commonplace. She was perfectly well. And Aunt Augusta improved each day, save for a terrifying relapse whenever Lydia suggested leaving her. She missed him, of course. She certainly supposed he wanted her to. Why not? No, surely! He must never think of asking to be relieved on the Embassy. She was very set up indeed, to find herself Madame l'Ambassadrice. He had better not dare resign, and thus prick her upblown pride. Was it really true that they met in conclave, as the German caricaturists had it, in a dormouse's nest, and went to their conferences riding on snails? She enclosed the caricature, cut from a late review. She was now going driving, then to dine with the Atterburys, where she would have an extremely good time, and she continued to be his very loving Lydia.

It happened that Bronson, being uncommonly tired and a trifle disheartened, did not read hunger and thirst between the lines.

The long summer wore away. The newspapers, having recalled several precipitate announcements of a settlement, began to make a joke of the affair. The Russian envoy's claims were the stumbling-block. He was a woolly person in more ways than one, and his extravagant demands occasioned much uneasiness for those in high places, and much profane and vain swearing for his associates. Finally it was whispered that the present Commission could never reach an agreement. A new council must be appointed. This report was officially denied, but it roused unpleasant international gossip, at a most inopportune moment. Bronson, who had been making quiet negotiations for his release, was urgently entreated by the State Department, backed by insistent appeals from the President, to stand by the Commission. His resignation would swell the rumors of disagreement, and might even precipitate a renewal of hostilities.

Bronson shut his teeth and accepted the situation in silence. Unluckily, his example was not contagious. The rumors grew. The caricaturists worked overtime. The

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great journals indulged in satiric leaders and in top-heavy monographs. Bronson, grimly silent, endured. And Lydia waited.

Suddenly, like a spark to a smouldering fuse, word flashed through the continent, that the long wrangle had flamed into actual violence. The Spanish Commissioner had snapped his fingers in the face of his Prussian colleague. The Belgian deputy had had his eminent ears pulled by the Russian envoy, and had astoundingly retaliated by throwing his opponent through the window, to the detriment of his ambassadorial dignity, and the intense delight of several malapropos onlookers. Thereat a great many things happened, all at once. The press reports leaped from satires and monographs to double columns and flaring headlines. The two great contending Powers proceeded unostentatiously to collect cavalry, and equip a few more war ships apiece. The stock market betrayed ominous flutterings. The President of one country called a hurried Cabinet meeting at his fishing shack, the King of another improvised a council chamber aboard his yacht.

The tension rose hour by hour; the civilized world hung on the brink of panic: when—incredible!—the nations were electrified by news that, in a single night, as by miracle, the envoys had reached a complete and friendly understanding. The demands of both disputants had been met by a new protocol. Through their representatives, the two sovereigns announced themselves absolutely satisfied with its provisions. Behold, a triumph of Diplomacy at its best! After all its vacillations and its blunders, the Commission had proven itself magnificently adequate to its high task. The Commission sat back in a blaze of glory, and waited for applause.

When the applause came, however, it was not for the Commission, but for one Commissioner, alone. For, as the Paris despatches proclaimed, this superb victory for peace, this coup incomparable, was the work of one man. Of one sole mastermind, unaided, illumined only of his own genius: in a word, of the astute, the brilliant, the amazing Monsieur B. Wolcott, already famous in his own land, now wreathed with international laurels. He it was who had calmed the agitations of the Spanish envoy; he who smoothed the ruffled plumage of the Preuss eagle; he who tranquillized the prickles of the Belgian hedgehog; he who—yet more wonderful—had rushed to the rescue of the bumped and infuriate Russian bear, had picked him up, dusted him off, and, by some inspired sorcery, had soothed his outraged emotions, and led him, meek as any lamb of the Caucasus, to head the Signers on the protocol. And, climax upon climax! Even the amended protocol itself, this miracle of strategy, was the work of the sublime Monsieur B. Wolcott. Impossible? Yet true. It was a wonder past belief that this, the century's triumph in diplomacy, should come out of America; America, the crude, the naïve, the gauche, the yokel among nations. But honor where honor is due. To the amiable Monsieur Wolcott, one owed not of praises alone, but of gratitude, as well, that he had thus cut the Gordian knot. There followed much ornate detail.

Lydia was allowed to read the cabled accounts of her husband's prowess on the day that her son was a week old. That same morning, she permitted a cablegram to be sent Bronson, telling him of the child's coming. In the face of scandalized protests, she had insisted that no word be sent him, if possible, until the conclusion of the treaty. She was quite aware that she was doing an outrageous thing. But she knew intuitively that the man was carrying an overpowering load, and that the shock of even happy news might mean a grave interruption. Moreover, her cloud of self-distrust had darkened in these lonely weeks till it distorted every outlook of life. If she could not keep step with Bronson, she could at least keep out of his way. Her husband's new fame seemed to set him still farther apart from her. She saw herself a regrettable obstacle in his road. The baby, a sturdy splendid atom, did not bring her the orthodox comfort. For all her precocity of mind, Lydia's emotions were slower of growth. Above her instinct of motherhood rose her instinct of longing to be mothered, for the tenderness that only Bronson knew to give. And in the lack of it, she did not especially thrive.

When Bronson at last came home to her, gray and drawn by the great anxious love and fear that had fairly consumed him, he was peremptorily ordered to present him-

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self with as little flourish of trumpets as possible. Therefore he talked soothingly of his steamer acquaintance, and described with much humor his quarrel with a Paris cabby, and his extremely narrow escape from arrest—an edifying anti-climax to his work on the Commission. Incidentally, he forgot to mention the sleepless nights he had paced the steamer deck, the wretched days he had fought through, week on week, torn between the unyielding claims of his professional honor and his sore tortured longing to be with her.

Lydia on her part had little to say. To Bronson, she seemed hardly glad to see him; rather, peacefully indifferent. As a matter of fact, she was so utterly content by the mere sight of him, the steadying notes of his deep voice, the grasp of his strong hands, that it never occurred to her to tell him so. She hardly spoke. She merely rested. Afterward, she reflected that Bronson had treated her much as if she and the baby were contemporaries. He had been tenderness itself. And he had "talked down" to her. Decidedly. He had not even told her the inner tale of the treaty, though he might know that she was passionately proud of his success. Perhaps he felt that she would not understand its complications. Very likely that was all. And that was quite enough. Poor Lydia pushed the baby away, and turned her face to the rose-tapestried wall.

It happened that Bronson also spent some rather heavy hours, considering how little he had seemed able to divert her. Still, when you considered that eighteen years' barrier, it was not strange. He might cherish and protect. That was his due. But he need not ask the crowning joy of giving happiness. He might as well accept the inevitable.

Then Bronson put away his meditations, and turned to his mountain of accumulated work. Immediately, also, the unescapable festivities in his honor, dinners and banquets without number, began. Between his toiling days in the office, and his laborious nights of recreation, the man grew stupid with fatigue. His rare hours with Lydia did not stimulate him. Lydia was lovelier than ever. But she was subtly changed from the rippling brook of a girl. She no longer flashed, challenged, sparkled. Instead, she yielded him a dim, sweet dutifulness; her cool serene detachment cut the man to the quick. She, too, was beginning to realize, to accept the inevitable. Poor little exile, turning back vainly toward her lost kingdom of youth! Poor child!

One November morning Lydia stood before her mirror, listlessly viewing herself in a new evening gown, just sent home. She herself had designed the dress, for the great Mayflower Dinner to be given that night in Bronson's honor. This would be her first appearance that season. When she had suggested going, Bronson had roused from his brown study, and had heartily and delightedly urged it. Lydia therefore had thrown her whole soul into the selection of a suitable array. Beside its momentous decisions, the choosing of her trousseau had been a trifle light as air. This once she must play up to Bronson's lead, she must stand abreast of him. If she could drink the wine of this small triumph, it would hearten her. And it would please Bronson. If she could please Bronson!

The maid smoothed down the clinging velvet with admiring hands. Lydia considered her image with a faint quizzical smile. The gown was green, a pale silvered tint, embroidered with opalescent jewels, frosted with long falling webs of lace. It was the perfection of its art. In its soft luminous draperies, the fresh-cheeked April Lydia would have been a half-blown rose. But in to-day's sharp autumn light, the dress drained her of every gleam of color. Against it, her lips were gray, her round throat showed waxen hollows, even her shining hair lost its bronze lustre. Lydia looked at it, impassively. One more failure.

"It will be better by electric light, Mrs. Wolcott," ventured the maid.

"Possibly," said Lydia, dryly. As the woman left the room, she picked up her telephone, and called Bronson's number.

"Is that you, Bronson? Yes, it's Lydia. I called up to say that I do not think I'll go to the dinner, after all. No. I'm sorry." She bit her lip at Bronson's prompt courteous concern, his dutiful affectionate question: "I'm sorry too. Anything wrong, Lydia?"

"Nothing. Only—I really don't believe —I care to. You're coming up to luncheon? Well—good-by."

As she put down the receiver, Aunt

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Augusta's cane clicked down the hall. Aunt Augusta, imposing in her primeval beaded plush driving coat, stalked in.

"Lydia! Why in the world aren't you out driving, this fine day? You need it to give you some color. You're positively haggard. You want to look your best at the Mayflower Dinner. *Not going?* Lydia, really, you are too absurd. Haven't you any interest whatever in Bronson Wolcott's affairs? You're not a child, nor a plaything—though I must say he treats you like one. I never saw a man spoil a woman so ridiculously in all my days. Come! You mustn't disappoint Bronson."

"I hardly think—what I do—matters to Bronson." Lydia's voice was as colorless as her lips. Aunt Augusta viewed her keenly.

"Well, of course Bronson is sufficient to himself. He can carry off any situation. But you surely might gratify him by showing yourself pleased with his successes."

"It does seem so, doesn't it?" murmured Lydia, unflinching. "Don't you want to see the baby, Aunt Augusta?"

"No, I cannot wait. *Aren't* you thankful that he's all Wolcott, Lydia! He's the image of his father. Not a drop of Burford in him. Now I must go on to Maria Day's, to luncheon. But, Lydia——"

The old woman hesitated; then she turned back. Her keen old face lighted with a strange sudden passion; a piteous wistfulness, tragic, inarticulate. So she might have turned back, impotently, to her own rebellious girlhood, beseeching it to hold fast the happiness already slipping through lax wilful hands. "Now, Lydia, don't be such a conceited little fool. Of course Bronson adores you absurdly. But for all that, he may be wishing inwardly that you would try harder to do your part. And some day—it may make a great difference. You never can tell."

"Indeed, you never can tell, Aunt Augusta. Thank you. I hope you have a pleasant luncheon, Good-by."

Lydia crossed the hall to the shaded nursery. There lay her small son, cuddled asleep, the firelight dancing on his silken head. Lydia bent over him warily. She worshipped her child; but she stood a little in awe of him. Aunt Augusta was quite right, she owned disconsolately. He was all Wolcott. Boston was stamped on his funny crumpled forehead, graven on his pink tongue. When he wanted anything, he announced his desires by a calm rhythmic ear-splitting yell, delivered with the precision and the efficiency of a rapid-fire gun. The note of assured and long-established hereditary supremacy rang in that yell. It had the foreordained success of a dominant tradition. Lydia marvelled, even admired. He knew so precisely what he wanted, he attained it with such minimum of effort, he was so eminently a Wolcott, a Salem Wolcott, a Copley, and a Sears! He even yelled in broad A's. Lydia stooped with a quivering laugh, and kissed his pudding-cheek. Alas, the baby opened a disturbed, reproachful eye. Then he rolled over and lifted an indignant shout.

"Oh, please don't! I didn't mean to!" Poor Lydia's coaxings were lost in the deafening flood. The nurse was below-stairs, eating her lunch. Even Bronson Jr.'s roars could not carry three floors down. Lydia would not have summoned her for worlds. "It's a pity if I can't quiet my own baby," she remarked, tremulously. "There, there, Sonny boy! Come, now!"

She gathered the warm wriggling bundle into her arms, and stood crooning and kissing him. Bronson Jr. squealed and resented with fists and feet, like a cross puppy. He was a heavy baby, and a strong one. Lydia's wrists were weak, and unaccustomed to his weight. One more irate bounce—and he rolled from Lydia's grasp and fell with a heart-stopping thud on the polished floor.

At last Lydia gathered him up again, and felt his soft little body with shaking terror-numbed hands. He was not even bruised. He blinked and gasped, then took up his yell precisely where he had left it off. Lydia sat on the floor, holding him. She dared not try to stand. The room whirled and darkened and gleamed; she could not see Bronson Jr.'s red affronted face when, at length, his fruitless howls died in outraged silence, and he set gloomily to chewing a fat thumb. She was still crouching there when Bronson entered the room.

"Lydia, you here? Why, darling! What is wrong?" Bronson caught up the baby, and dumped him into his crib, then caught Lydia up in turn. "Are you ill? Lydia! *what* has happened?"

"Nothing worth mentioning," said Lydia.

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She drew away from him. Her voice was very sweet and cool. "I—I dropped the baby. You'd think that if I hadn't sense enough for anything else, I could at least handle my own child. But it seems not. However, he didn't—break."

"I should say not. You couldn't break him with a hammer," said the father briefly. "But this has frightened you cruelly, Lydia. Sit down, dear."

"I'd rather not." Lydia stumbled back. Bronson caught her arm. His grasp sent leaping pulses to her heart.

"Wait, Lydia. Something else troubles you, I know. I—I've known that for a long time. Tell me."

"There's nothing to tell." Lydia sat rigid in the white chair. She spoke on without volition: she could hear her voice checking off the words like a cuckoo clock. "It doesn't matter, Bronson. I'm only so dreadfully sorry that I was so stupid as to imagine . . . that I was . . . equal to doing things . . . that I could truly make you happy. It was such a mistake——"

"I see."

Lydia's hand tightened on the chair-arm. She stared back at Bronson's ashen face. Something seemed to whir between them, like the snap of a breaking wire. Strange fear lit in their meeting eyes.

"I know." Bronson went on, picking his words. "I've quite realized. You've been so tired, so unhappy, ever since I came home. I can't help seeing it. I can't have you suffer like this, Lydia. Tell me the truth. Shall I stay away? Will that ease matters? It was my mistake in the beginning, dear. I asked too much. A man of my years should not have let himself imagine. . . . But I loved you so that I dared hope——"

"It isn't that you're—older. I'm proud of that. Or, I would be—if I could do my share, if I could live up to your life. So you needn't try to make it easier for me, Bronson." There were no tears in Lydia's heavy eyes. But her very soul was sobbing within her. "It's my fault, straight through. I'm not one of you and yours. There's nothing *to* me. To be sure, Mamma was lovely, and Papa was a dear, even if he was a Southerner. But they weren't born in Boston . . . so we were different . . . to begin with. And you'd never even have heard of me, only Aunt Augusta adopted me because I looked so much like Mamma . . . and then my teachers gave me high marks because I was poor, motherless little Lydia Burford . . . and other people were kind because they liked Aunt Augusta . . . and my book went through because I was a Crowninshield. . . . I'm all pretence, that's all. There's nothing to me, I say. I'm not wise enough, nor worthy enough, to be your wife. I never shall be. I'll never be fit to bring up your child. And, Bronson, you used to think I was pretty. But I'm not even that. I just have . . . a way——"

Bronson put out his hand toward her, then drew it back again. The room was silent save for the purr of the low fire, and Bronson Jr.'s confiding chuckle of reply.

At last Bronson stood up, white and grave.

"Do you mean this, Lydia?" he said, under his breath. "Are you trying to save my feelings? Are you avoiding the real issue, the difference of age, which makes——"

"I only wish I were," Lydia's voice was a whisper. Yet the low vibration held the ring of truth. "I've always been so proud because you *were* older. Because even then you chose me. But I, myself——"

Bronson looked at her a long minute. Dim understanding awoke in his drawn face. Here was a straw of chance. If it failed him— But it should not fail. He would take chance and risk alike, unflinching.

"I've a few matters of my own to confess to you, Lydia," he said, slowly. "When I've told them, we can talk over this—which you have told to me. I, too, have always felt that I was not worthy of your love. On my side, I am not in any sense adequate to bringing up this child. I'm all pretence myself."

"But, Bronson——"

"Oh, I know what you will say, that I have always succeeded in everything, straight through. True. But half my successes have been given to me, out of hand. The other half have been won on a fluke. Sheer luck. Nothing more. I was such an oaf that I barely got my bachelor's degree from Harvard—how I did sweat over it! I failed on Math three times running. But I was a Salem Wolcott, son of Signers and Founders through four generations, and somehow I'd be given another chance, each time. For my doctor's degree, that was

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pure luck. By accident I stumbled on those thirteenth-century manuscripts, and built up my Angevin Codes from them. Won on a fluke, you see. Though to hear the reviews praise me, you'd think I had written the Codes themselves. My success at law is nothing but grinding hard work. You can score in any profession if you bring all your time and strength to bear on it. For the rest—my family connections have given me everything. I have always possessed. And I have never earned. Lydia, do you understand me?"

Lydia was staring at him, colorless, wide-eyed.

"But the Commission, Bronson! That was your own. And that was wonderful. You can't disown that!"

"No. Though I'd like to." Bronson looked at her narrowly. Slow red pulsed to his forehead. "Lydia, have you wondered that I did not tell you of the amended protocol? Why I never refer to it?"

Lydia quivered.

"I thought perhaps—you felt it wasn't worth while——"

"That you weren't capable of understanding it? I see." Bronson's set lips twitched. Grim amusement flickered across his strained face. "Did it ever occur to you that I might be ashamed to?"

Lydia stared back at him.

"The papers were right in one sense. It *was* inspiration—of a sort. The night I put it through—ugh! I don't like to remember. It's like a hideous jumbled dream. It was white-hot, that sickening, gritty heat of Paris in late September. I'd been slaving on the new protocol all day, and I felt sure of its acceptance, save by our Russian friend, Poltavenski. Not that he'd question my compromises; merely that he so loved a fight for the fight's sake.

"Somewhere near midnight I left my rooms and started down the boulevard for a breath of air before turning in. Presently I ran into Poltavenski. He was surprisingly amiable, for he had just won a couple of hundred francs at the Maison Vert, and he urged me to join him for a bite of supper. I wasn't enthusiastic; and I was still less eager when the salmi and the melon appeared. The salmi was flavorless and cold. The melon was warm. The wine was past praying for. And Poltavenski, of course, made a most edifying scene.

"'Thousand deffil!' he remarked. 'Must a gentleman thus serve his guest, with such parings, such dregs and refuse! Bring to me quickly M. le Propriétaire, *marmiton*, that I may instruct him!'

"'Why not order something that we can cook for ourselves?' I suggested, to calm him down. 'Sweetbreads, or omelette, say——'

"'Entrails of a calf!' fumed Poltavenski. 'Innocent babes of fowls! I am no Herod, I. If there could be of fish, yes. Or mushrooms. But this swine of a landlord will never see fish till that Day when he and his kindred shall rush with violence down a steep place into the sea.'

"'Could we have lobsters?' I asked the waiter. You should have seen him brighten. By amazing luck, they had a tankful, very much alive, and as the man assured me, of a necessity fresh. 'And mushrooms?' By another special dispensation, there were truffles, that day gathered. 'Sweet peppers?' Again my garçon beamed."

"And, Bronson, you——"

"I did. I confess it. I was lost to all sense of shame. I made that identical stew we used to make on our beach picnics; lobsters and truffles and sweet peppers, with cream, and paprika to touch it off. I sat and smiled and cooked. He sat and chortled and ate. I made one chafing-dishful; two; three—Lydia, you will never believe, so I shall never tell you, the quantity which that cheerful cormorant devoured. The Slav stomach is a phase of the mysterious East which my limited Anglo-Saxon understanding will never grasp. When at last he pushed back his plate and smacked his lips and began to express his feelings, he was ready to sign a dozen protocols. He'd have given me not only my concessions, but, in his new heartfelt affection, he'd have given me Manchuria into the bargain—for the recipe. I remarked that we might drop into my rooms and glance over the new draft while finishing our cigars. He complied, still gurgling joyously. It did not take him three minutes to glance gayly through that amended protocol. Nor two to affix his signature."

There was a long silence. Finally Lydia looked up

"Then—you mean—in a way, we've been deceiving ourselves, not each other,"

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she whispered. There were heavy tears on her long lashes: but shamed April laughter strayed through. The rarest gift of all her fairy dower, her common-sense, was coming to her aid. "We've imagined ourselves so superficial, we've blamed ourselves so unnecessarily——"

"Precisely."

"And yet—it doesn't make any real difference, does it? Now that we—we know." Hot color flamed into her cheek. As if shaken awake by some strong hand, she was suddenly rousing out of her long wretched dream. Mercifully she did not see the gulf of fathomless misunderstanding over whose brink she had so nearly slipped. Had she looked up, she might have seen the shadow of that gulf upon her husband's face. But her shamed eyes were turned away.

"Bronson!—What a goose I've been! And—Oh! You've been just as great a goose, I do believe. Just to think, after all our grieving and misery and self-blame, that—that we're both in the same boat!"

"Exactly the same boat," said Bronson, gravely.

He stooped and picked up Bronson Jr., still superciliously sucking his much-enduring thumb.

"I don't see any way out of it for you," he said, sombrely. "You'll have to accept this environment of sham and dissimulation, you'll have to breathe the atmosphere of pretence and opportunism all your days, you'll have to be brought up by hopelessly inept, incapable, superficial parents—or else go to an orphan asylum."

Then he laid the baby down, and went to his wife.

ON COMO

By George Meredith

A RAINLESS darkness drew o'er the lake,
As we lay in our boat with oars unshipped.
It seemed neither cloud nor water awake;
And forth of the low black curtain slipped
Thunderless lightning. Scoff no more
At angels imagined in downward flight
For the daughters of earth, as fabled of yore:
Here was beauty might well invite
Dark heavens to gleam with the fire of a sun
Resurgent; here the exchanged embrace,
Worthy of heaven and earth made one.

And, witness it, ye of the privileged space,
Said the flash; and the mountains, as from an abyss,
For quivering seconds leaped up to attest
That given, received, renewed was the kiss;
The lips to lips and the breast to breast;
All in a glory of ecstasy, swift
As an eagle at prey, and pure as the prayer
Of an infant bidden joined hands uplift
To be guarded through darkness by spirits of air,
Ere setting the sails of sleep till day.

Slowly the low cloud swung, and far
It panted along its mirrored way.
Above loose threads one sanctioning star
The wonder of what had been witnessed sealed.
And with me still, as in crystal glassed,
Are the depths alight, the heavens revealed,
Where on to the Alps the Muteness passed.

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THE CHRISTMAS HANDICAP

By James B. Connolly

Illustrations by F. C. Yohn

THE race in which I defeated the so-called Australian for the championship of America was worth two thousand dollars to me, which two thousand, barring a few inevitable dollars spent in treating the crowd, I should have brought home to my wife and little girl, and so made sure that all would be well with them till the next season. And so I intended, but in the most accidental way in the world we—Fifield, the bookmaker, was with me—we ran into a faro-bank on the way home, and in the morning I came away with about enough to pay for a good breakfast at a hotel, for after that I would not go home. I had said on leaving my wife that I would come back to her with the money in my pocket or not at all.

I had to borrow a half-dollar off Fifield to tip the waiter. "Tell my wife I've gone, but don't tell her where," I said to Fifield, and went on down to the docks and shipped on a cattle-steamer. Not what you might call one of the preferred occupations, feeding cattle and cleaning their stalls, but not laborious, either. Only the food—the men's food—is not what it might be, even for men down on their luck. And the men are not always what they might be. Plenty of good-enough people, some who are unfortunate or some just adventurous ones among them, but sometimes also a bad one. There was one who did not take to me any more than I took to him, a big brute of a chap, the heavy-weight bully of the after-hold. Perhaps he thought I was as meek as I must have seemed blue—he must have thought so, for nothing in my build or looks should have led him to think I could not put up a fight with anything walking God's earth. The afternoon I ran the Australian, I had stripped at 182 pounds, and not a pound of it you could have torn off with anything less than a cotton-hook. And make no mistake, I was still in condition; one night at the gaming-table, nor four days of bad food on the steamer, was not pushing me back to the second class.

This chap picked a fight with me, and I threw him into a stall where four Colorado steers would have trampled him to death had not his mates hauled him out onto the alley-way in a hurry. "And if we'd been on deck I'd just as soon've thrown you overboard—and could do it as easy as I say it, too," I ripped out at him, and so I would, or to any man who came at me as he had. Once I got warmed up I did not mind taking a chance at most anything. I had backed the starter's gun in too many big races not to have nerve, and had carried my weight down the track at too fast a clip too many times not to know I had power.

But if this chap was a surprised man, he was not altogether giving up the fight; at least he was believed to be the man who, a few nights later, dropped a bale of hay down the hold onto me, who was stretched out on the hatch two decks below. Sometimes those bunks on cattle-ships are not any too clean, and I was sleeping out this night. Now a bale of hay falling through the height of two decks doesn't come down like any hatful of feathers. It loosened two of my ribs, so said the head-steward, who had once studied medicine and was the nearest thing to a doctor the ship carried, and who, after a fashion, also trussed me up. He did not make a good job of the bandaging—even he himself said as much—which probably caused him also to say: "But what can you expect? The man ought to be dead, anyway!" But I wasn't, though when the inflammation set in and the fever began to keep me awake nights I almost wished I was. Almost, but not quite; there was always the wife and the child in mind.

In Liverpool, after the ship was docked, I collected what money was coming to me for the eleven days' passage. But first I beat up the man who probably dropped the bale of hay on me, beat him up good in a quiet out-of-the-way alley in a part of Liverpool where cattle-men and their kind hang about. There are regions there where

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the police take scant notice when two of the guild engage in battle, provided it does not become too general, or they do not take to welting too many outsiders.

They probably aim not to debauch their help, those steamship lines—ten shillings was coming to me for the trip. Some of the crew said I was lucky not to be docked a few bob for the three days I was laid up with the floating ribs. And doubtless so; but from out of that two dollars and a half I bought a third-class ticket to Manchester, where I remembered was a man famous in America for backing professional sprint-runners. I found his place—a "pub" with a sort of eating-house attached. There I ordered my roast-beef and potatoes and a mug of ale, and they did taste nourishing. As I ate and drank I gave ear to the talk going on around me. It was all of horses, whippets and foot-running. I soon learned what I most wanted to know—before New Year's there would be several good professional handicaps, with the betting on them promising to be lively.

Before I had finished my meal the master himself came in and sat down among his customers. I took a good look at him. A pretty decent sort he appeared, one who might have the nerve to take a chance on a man who could show him a good performance, and who might give a fellow a fair share of the winnings after he had won; which coincided with what I had heard of him. A square "gaffer," the professional sprinters termed him.

After I had smoked my single pipeful, which I allowed myself after every meal when not in strict training, I picked up my little bag, which held my running clothes and shoes, a pair of running corks, a tooth-brush and a hair comb—nothing more—and approached my man. "Mr. Ensey, I've been doing a bit of sprinting on the other side. It's no use telling what I'm good for—you'll have a chance to see that for yourself if you'll take me on. Will you bed and board me till I've had a fair try-out?" I said no more than that then.

The old fellow looked me over. He would probably have looked a horse over in pretty much the same way except that he paid more attention, possibly, to my face than he might if I were a horse. "What do you weigh?" he asked at last.

"I did strip at 182 pounds two weeks ago."

"M—m—thirteen stone—but you don't weigh that now?"

"No—o—probably not."

"And why?"

I might have told him of the broken ribs and the fever, but I did not care to. It sounded too much like an excuse. I have small use myself for men who are always producing excuses, good-sounding excuses though they be, in place of performances. This man was concerned in my running, not in my troubles. How fast could I swing through a hundred and fifty yards, not how did I happen to get a couple of cracked ribs, was what the old gaffer wanted to know. So now I answered, "It must have been the bad passage."

"H—m—— My lad, if you lose nigh a stone-weight crossing the Atlantic, I'm not sure you've the timber to stand the hard training we put a handicap runner through here. But what 've you ever done on the other side?"

I hesitated to answer, but finally did say: "I've done evens——" meaning ten seconds for a hundred yards.

He smiled ever so little. "H—m—— Not too many 'ave showed me evens over here—not for *my* watch. Them ten-second amachurs can't ever show better than a quarter or 'alf second for me."

"I'm no amateur."

"Well, on another look, I'll give you credit, I don't think you are. I'm puttin' you down for something better than a cup-huntin' amachur. But what's your name? I must 've heard of you, if you're anything great."

I wanted to be honest with him—I liked the old fellow already—but I preferred not to give my name just then. "Suppose you let that go for awhile?"

"H—m—m. Well, please yourself, but when a man's goin' to the expense of taking care of you for some weeks maybe he's not askin' o'ermuch to know your name. But please yourself. I like your looks."

That same afternoon I ran a trial for him. The blue feeling was on me again, and my side aching terribly. I knew I could not run fast enough to get away from a policeman, but I went with Ensey to the track. A dozen or more idlers, curious to see the American run, also went along.

I did my best, but I had to run alone—and I never could run well alone, though I

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"Will you bed and board me, till I've had a fair try-out?"—Page 684.

did not tell the gaffer so. As I say—excuses are no recommendation to a man who is risking money on you.

After I had crossed the finish line I allowed my momentum to carry me, in the customary way, on for fifty yards or so, so as not to strain anything by stopping too suddenly. By the time I had returned to the old man he had replaced the watch in his pocket and I did not ask to look at it. But that it was very slow I knew. The faces of the idlers, not to mention their comment, proved that. "Huh—that chap. 'E can't run as fast as my old woman," says one. That was enough.

I was in the dressing-room, about to get out of my running togs, when the gaffer entered. "Eh, lad, how long is it since you've run in ten seconds on the other side?"

"Oh—not so long."

"M—m—but you do fall away fast. What d'y' think you did to-day?"

I said I had no idea. I dreaded to be told; and the old fellow guessed as much. "And I don't know as I blame you, lad. It was——" He whispered it, as he might some shameful secret.

Well, I could believe it, though not since my first race in public, one for boys of sixteen years, had I run so slow.

"And the marvel is you've such a grand style. I do like your style, lad."

"Well——" I was lying on the rubbing-board—the pain of my side forced me to lie down. "I suppose you won't care to keep me after that trial."

"I didn't say that, lad, though on the judgment of it I shouldn't be wasting another ha'penny on you. But I can't get over your style. You've got the style of a champion—you have that—and I must say, too, every other mark of a champion but the speed. What is it—what's wrong?"

I had got as far as removing my spiked shoes in the undressing process when the gaffer had entered, and there I stopped. I wanted him to think that his entrance had put out of my mind the thought of further undressing. I wanted him to leave before I pulled off my running shirt; but plainly he was going in no hurry. And the longer I delayed the more bound he was to stay. At length I could not help seeing that he was suspicious of something or other. Well, the truth was better than some sorts of suspicion, and, after all, if he was ever to back me why shouldn't he know? I drew off my

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shirt, and then old Ensey saw the bandage about my body.

"Eh, lad—what's that 'ere?"

Then I told him, and how I came by it.

"And was it right, d' y' think, to hide it from me—me that's to be put to the expense of keeping ye?" But he was mostly sympathy. "And ye tried to run with that? Man, it's resting, not running, ye should be. Come, now, and lay by a week or two, and then we'll see what ye'll make of it."

I rested two weeks, jogged easily for another week, and then showed a gain of six yards over that first trial. "Ah—h—that's more like, but a long ways off yet of championship form." I did not tell him that once out of my running I was rather slow to come around, nor that my weakness was not yet gone; nor that raw, foggy weather, as they had this day, was terribly discouraging. Dry weather always for me. Cold or hot, no matter, so it be dry.

Another week and I ran two yards faster. Four days later another yard came off. "You surely are coming, lad. Show me a quarter second off that again and I'll give you a pair of pumps—" (spiked shoes he meant) "off the best shoemaker in England."

"You can order them for next week," I answered to that. And on the day appointed I won my pumps; and that same day I was entered for the next handicap. I was not so far short of my true form then, for it must be remembered that in all my trials I had run alone. And, as I have said, running alone never suited me. I needed somebody alongside trying to pass me, or somebody ahead striving to beat me out. To me any race at all meant two yards above my practice time. A big race, with a great crowd and, it might be, a band of music, with the cheering and shouting, the betting calls and so on—a championship, or match for big money—meant from three to four yards to me. I never could run cold. I suppose it was that my imagination as well as muscle had to be tuned up before I could get all that was in me out.

But I said nothing of all this to my gaffer, and a week later when I won my handicap, showing form equal to ten seconds flat, the old man was taken by surprise.

"Aye, lad, but if I'd a notion ye were that kind, I'd made a pot of money on ye—twenty-five to one against. I'd only five pounds down on ye. Why, ye're a real racer. And you're in rare form." And he really thought so; but I was not yet in form. I had told Ensey that I had done ten seconds in America. As a matter of fact the day I won from the Australian I had done nine and four-fifths seconds, though the time was returned as ten seconds; and at that, after going fifty yards, certain I could not lose, I had let down. And further, though this was known to but a few good friends, I had done inside nine and three-fifths seconds in a race before that. On that occasion, also, the watches had caught me in ten seconds, which was correct, but the course was five yards over the hundred—a mistake that did no harm. I was after a living, not records. But what use *telling* the gaffer what I could do when there would soon be a chance to *show* what I could do.

Of the thirty pounds I received for winning that first race I sent Fifield twenty, for my wife and little one, but saying also that he must not yet tell her where I was; otherwise she would be over on the next steamer, which was not what I wanted. Too many people here that I did not want her to mix with, and also I did not want to face her until I had made good that two thousand dollars. The balance, ten pounds, I handed back to my gaffer, saying, "Just before we go to the post in the next race lay that on me," which, when the time came, the gaffer did, at ten to one.

But now they had discovered who I was, and classed me accordingly, on my reputed speed, nine and four-fifths seconds for the hundred. I would hereafter be back mark man, on scratch with the English champion, whom I had not yet met. I won that race, one hundred and thirty yards, in twelve and two-fifths seconds, and that for the jealous watches of men whose living depended on their getting it to half a yard.

The old gaffer, for whom I was gladder than for myself, hugged me in his joy. "Lad, lad, but ye do storm at the finish. I never see aught like the way ye came through that last thirty yards. Where'd ye learn it?"

I did not tell him that I could have come yet faster if it were needed, but—"You'll enter me for the big Christmas 'cap now," I did say.

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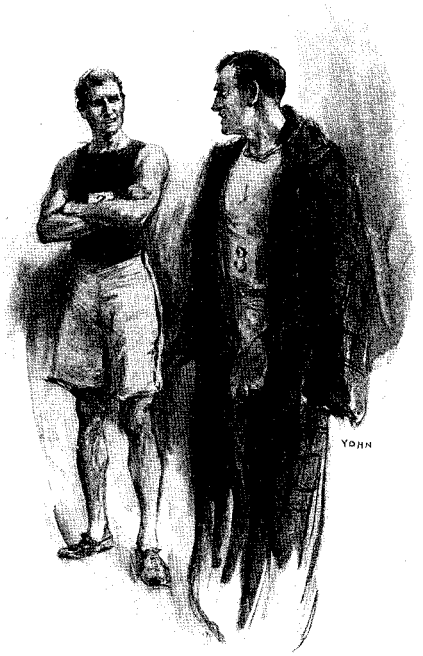
"That I will, and if your mark isn't too restrictive, I'll lay more than a few pounds on ye."

"Oh, no fear but I'll be well back on an impossible mark this next time. They'll not have the American running away with any more 'caps for awhile again."

How he chuckled at that! "You have it right! You've done what no stranger ever did before—win two 'caps. And I'm proud enough to have had the 'andling of you. Aye, they'll make it impossible for ye next time, but ye'll try for a place if naught else? Aye, that's it. And there's no doubt ye'll meet our English champion—they say he's saving himself for it. How do you like the notion of meeting him?"

"It suits me. But I'll want a special preparation for it, the same as he'll get."

"You'll have it, lad, as good a preparation as any sprinter in England ever 'ad—as 'Arry 'Utchins 'imself ever 'ad. And we'll put you in a stable at Sheffield to train for it."



"Ho, Ho, with nine yards the devil from hell won't get me."—Page 694.

II

It is in England, where stables of professional runners are kept as if they were stables of horses, that they know how to get a sprinter in shape. During my eight weeks' preparation I slept, with four others, in a large back ell-room of a small hotel in Sheffield. Every night at ten we were locked in that room by a little old, scrappy Scotchman, who kept the keys in his pocket and slept on the other side of the door. Every morning at half-past six we were called for a stroll, to take the kinks out of legs and back and arms and to put the fresh air into our lungs. Returning from that we were towelled lightly, then allowed to sit down to breakfast. At ten or half-past we dropped down to the grounds for practice. No hard working—just a fooling around and a few starts, but finishing up with a long, easy swinging quarter in fifty-five or fifty-six seconds, to start the sweat. In the afternoon we did our fast work. After each practice we were given a good rub-down; and before turning in at night we were rubbed down again.

We were worked like race-horses, fed like horses, with the best of food and plenty of it—this little hotel was famous for its good beef and chops and vegetables—and at night we slept like horses. The five of us, we would tick off to sleep like so many clocks, as Angus used to say. But with all that never a touch of drudgery. It was the work we were best fitted for, the work that of all else on earth we would rather do. Out of sheer love of the game we would have gone through it for nothing; would have paid for the chance, some of us, if not allowed to do it otherwise. And I may say I never knew a world-beater in athletics who did not go at his work with that same feeling. If it were not so he would never have become a champion. And I imagine that it is pretty much that way in any other profession.

This work into which we put so much passionate energy was fast bringing us to as near physical perfection as man may get. I know that after six weeks of it, on top of the six weeks of good living that had preceded, I was like a tiger. Cloistered almost, like so many monks, only worse off than monks—no spiritual devotions to counterbalance—with no outlet for our boiling energy but our sprinting practice, our trouble was to hold ourselves in. Returning from the grounds after practice we used, out of excess of animal spirits, to dare each other

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to all kinds of foolish stunts, may be betting sixpence or a shilling a corner on the outcome. One afternoon I took in a running leap a street that, so they told me, the champion long jumper of middle England had refused to attempt for a hundred pounds. The leap was not extraordinary—nor had I ever trained specially for jumping—a good jump, no more—but the run to it was most uneven and the curbing on which I landed broken and jagged. The thing was that if I did not take off and land just right I would probably break or strain something—my ankle or instep. There were that and other things which I had no notion of attempting until suddenly I found myself doing them. There was the spiked iron fence which surrounded our hotel to the height of a man's shoulder. They dared me, one day, to stand off ten yards from it, hop up to it, then hop over it, in ordinary street clothes and shoes of course, from the brick sidewalk. If I did not clear it, the spikes would probably be driven into my left side or thigh, and I be left in a bad way.

I tackled it and I remember the bar-maid—she was looking through the window of the hotel—a score or more were gathered outside—the bar-maid shrieking as I rose in the air. But she needn't have—I cleared it handily.

But the gaffer got after her when it was all over. He came along too late to stop it. "Don't ever you yell like that again, Miss Arnold, when a man's trying a thing like that. If you can't bear it, don't look." He spoke roughly enough, as he could at times.

"But, Mr. Ensey, who'd ever think he was really going to try it—such an awful thing, and fancy if he slipped up!"

"A wonder he didn't—at your murder yell!"

"But a man don't slip up, Guv'nor, when he's *got* to do a thing," I put in here, wanting to help her out.

"Some don't, maybe. I don't fancy you've eyes or ears for anything but what you're after at the moment, but all men aren't that way. And, Ned, you want to begin to put the brake on. You've got so much bloody energy tearin' round in you now that you'll go crazy or explode soon if you don't watch out. A little will-power is what you need now, lad."

I answered nothing to that, only called for the half-pint of bitter beer which I allowed myself before dinner and supper when in training.

But my gaffer hadn't done yet. He turned to my stable-mates: "Let me ketch any o' you darin' 'im again—just let me! Don't you know 'is temper by this time?—and the trial 'eats less than a week away!"

Going out the door, I looked back to see how they were taking it, and in so doing met the bar-maid's eye. She had her handkerchief to one side of her face as if brushing her flushed cheek, but on the side away from the old man was an expression that I did not know what to make of.

The trial heats of the big handicap, to which my gaffer referred, were run on the second day before Christmas. Being the important running race of the year, a great crowd was present; and as by this time there was so much curiosity to see me, the only foreigner who had ever come to England and won two handicaps, that the management offered me fifty pounds to insure my appearance. I was now, in the eyes of the public, next best man to Rowden, their champion, although the betting men, who are better judges, rated me as his equal; some privately said I was a shade faster. I knew myself I was faster—"a good bit faster," my gaffer said, but not in public.

Rowden and I had the same mark—that is, we both started from scratch; and we both won our first trial heats. There would be great running, everybody said, when we came together. But we never came together. In the semi-finals, an entry that nobody had figured on, a man named Heddon, with nine yards start, stayed so far in the lead that forty yards from home Rowden dropped his arms and gave it up. It was a scandalous beating, and with the report of Heddon's easy win, away flew my chances.

Leaving the grounds that afternoon, everybody was saying, "Heddon, Heddon? *Who* is this Heddon?"

But trust our shrewd old gaffer to get hold of something about him. He came to me at supper in the hotel. "We're hooked," he began. "I knew him when he used to run in Caledonian outings and small 'caps in Scotland two or three years back, and then he dropped out of sight. His entry would come in from time to time to this handicap and that, but he'd never

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run. Now we see why he's been running under cover, all this time—only the Lord knows where or under what name. A proper sleeper he is. Laid by till all was right for the killin'. A pot of money for him to win the final, as of course he will. His backer will see that he don't go wrong for that."

"Who's his backer?"

"H—m—m— there now. I've my suspicions, but I'll find more about it. I've scouts out. I'll be back, by and by, and report."

I finished my supper and smoked my half-pipeful, and then Angus went out for a stroll, to see if he couldn't discover something about Heddon. He invited me to go along, but I said I didn't care to go. "But leave me the keys," I called out after him.

"Oh, aye——" he tossed them back—"the old Guv'nor could always trust you—you're not like the others."

I wanted to be alone, and started for the room, which this night I was to have to myself, because my stable-mates, who had not so much as won a single heat among them all, were through with training. They were now out and about the city enjoying themselves. And how they could and would enjoy themselves! After a man has been exercising like a race-horse and living like an anchorite for months—he is the man who has the capacity for pleasure, not the man who is pursuing it all the time. And pleasure? I slammed my bare hand against the hall wall as I thought of it. It was blessed little pleasure I was having these days. I must have exclaimed aloud at the thought, for a voice said—"Don't take it so to heart."

It was the blonde bar-maid; and if I haven't said much of her before this, don't imagine that she wasn't a factor in the life of the place, or that the light of her beauty was hid under any bushel. And she could measure a man up—the physical and emotional make-up of a man at any rate—as quickly as any old gaffer in the world.

She was the one feature of the hotel which my gaffer did not like. He wanted no women around when men were training. And this was a "specially damn dangerous creature," he used to say, "to be standin' about." All I had to do with her was when I would go in after practice every morning and afternoon and get my half-pint of bitter beer. There, of course, she was always, and naturally I said "Good morning" or "Good afternoon" to her.

No every-day bar-maid: with her figure and locks, she would have made a hit on the stage. Our fellows used to put an extra edge on their appetite before meals arguing why she did not go on the stage. "Why don't she?" the old gaffer would answer. "Why? You know damn well why. It's *men*, not Johnnies, she wants."

Whatever the reason, be sure it was not because she could not if she wanted to. I was rather surprised to see her now. She should have been behind the bar. But there she was at the foot of the stairs. She had never been free in her speech with me as with the others; nor was she over-free now. Indeed, there was even a backwardness in her manner.

"You're looking blue," she said. She did not call me by name. She used to call all the others by their Christian names—Joey, or Charlie, or Georgie—but she never addressed me by any name at all—unless she caught my eye or there was no other person present, she never spoke to me at all.

"You're looking blue."

"I'm *feeling* blue," I said.

"No wonder. But cheer up—no disgrace even if you can't win to-morrow."

"It's not the race!"

"No?"

"No." And looking at her, I thought of another woman. Her face flushed. One hand crept up to her neck-piece. God forgive me for anything in my eyes that made her blush, but 'twas not her just then—'twas a sweeter girl I had in mind.

I went up the stairs. On the landing I looked back. She was still standing there, a handsome woman. She smiled, and going through the door which led to the back of the bar, she smiled again. And there was more than pure kindness in the smile.

I continued to my room. I *was* blue. When you haven't seen or heard from your wife for four months, when you have had no answer to half a dozen letters, when you have been sending money-orders home and no word of acknowledgment of them either, when you know yourself to be a man who never understood women, and there was I only a professional sprinter, when she might have married other men, with any of whom she'd be running no risk

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of ever wanting for the good things of life —I tell you I *was* blue. And there was the little girl, too.

Well, I had only myself to blame. I had gone off, after throwing away the money won in the big race, without a word, though of course Fifield would explain something of that; would possibly make her understand that it was my old besetting sin, the love of a wager, and not the cold intention, which started me: no close friend of mine, Fifield, but surely friend enough to do that. He had won many a dollar on me—he owed me that little kindness.

There I sat and thought. Nobody came near me. I thought of Angus, probably having a mug of ale somewhere; of the old gaffer, ferreting out news of Heddon. But always my mind would go back to my wife. Why hadn't she sent word? Fifield, too, was to write after he had delivered my message to her; but from him never a word, either.

I was still sitting there when ten o'clock struck. I opened the window, which looked out on the side street. A fine night; many people on the street, and from the "pub" below, which opened also onto the side street, the noise of cheerful voices. Two or three of them plainly were celebrating—had doubtless won a few pounds on the race, won it off men like myself, and they could afford to take a drink. *Could* and *would*. But I mustn't. Not me—I was in training. To-morrow night, now, I would be free and could drink—if I cared to—but not to-night. A fine freedom, indeed! A fine life altogether! Putting enough physical and mental energy into my work to bring success to half a dozen tradesmen, and what was I getting out of it? To-morrow I was slated for defeat—a bad defeat. Four yards he might head me. A fine return for weeks of self-denial and effort! Fine, fine! Well, thank the Lord, to-morrow night would end my running.

To-morrow night? Surely I was a proper fool—to-morrow night. Even if I get second place, what was fifty pounds—my gaffer's share? It surely couldn't break him. To sweep up a field of bets was his game. And the next day after was Christmas. A fine Christmas! A merry Christmas! Hadn't seen wife or child in four months, and nigh four thousand miles from home.

About then, or, it may have been an hour later—Lord knows how your mind works at such times—I heard from the yard, which was in the rear of the house, the voice of the room-boy: whereat I ran—my mind always did get a jumping start—I ran to the rear window and whistled. He answered.

"Come up," I called, "the back steps."

He came—by way of the back door. I drew out some change. "Bring me up some ale—three bottles. Say nothing to nobody, and bring them up the back way."

He would have brought three bottles of poison just as quickly. In no time he was back.

"Now bring me more—a dozen this time." He went. He was proud to go for me. Wasn't I the fastest sprinter in the world? And wasn't my name in letters two feet high, adorning every dead wall in town? And my full-length picture in every sporting paper of that week?

He was hardly out of the door when I opened a bottle and gulped it down; and another, and was opening the third when he returned with the twelve bottles, which he set at my feet on the floor, and then handed me a sealed envelope.

"What's this?"

"A note."

"So I suppose. But who from?"

"Oh—h," he leered at me knowingly, cunningly, "You know."

"I know?" I looked at him. He was a precocious one, acquainted with many things before his time. "I know—hah?" I drew the cork out of the third bottle—and slowly let it pour down my throat. "I know—hah? And what is it I know? And how do *you* know I know?"

"She said you'd know."

"*She?* And whoever *she* is, how did she know you were coming up here?"

"She guessed where I was going—wormed it out of me—I didn't mean to tell, but you can't keep a thing from her. And——"

The door was heard opening below—the front door. And closing. "Sh—sh—it's your gaffer—he's no love for me—but she said she'd be off at twelve," and was gone down the back stairs. Waiting a moment to make sure it was my gaffer's step on the stairs, I pushed the bottles, empty and full, under the bed, and drew down the blanket so that all were hid. The note I stuck in my pocket.

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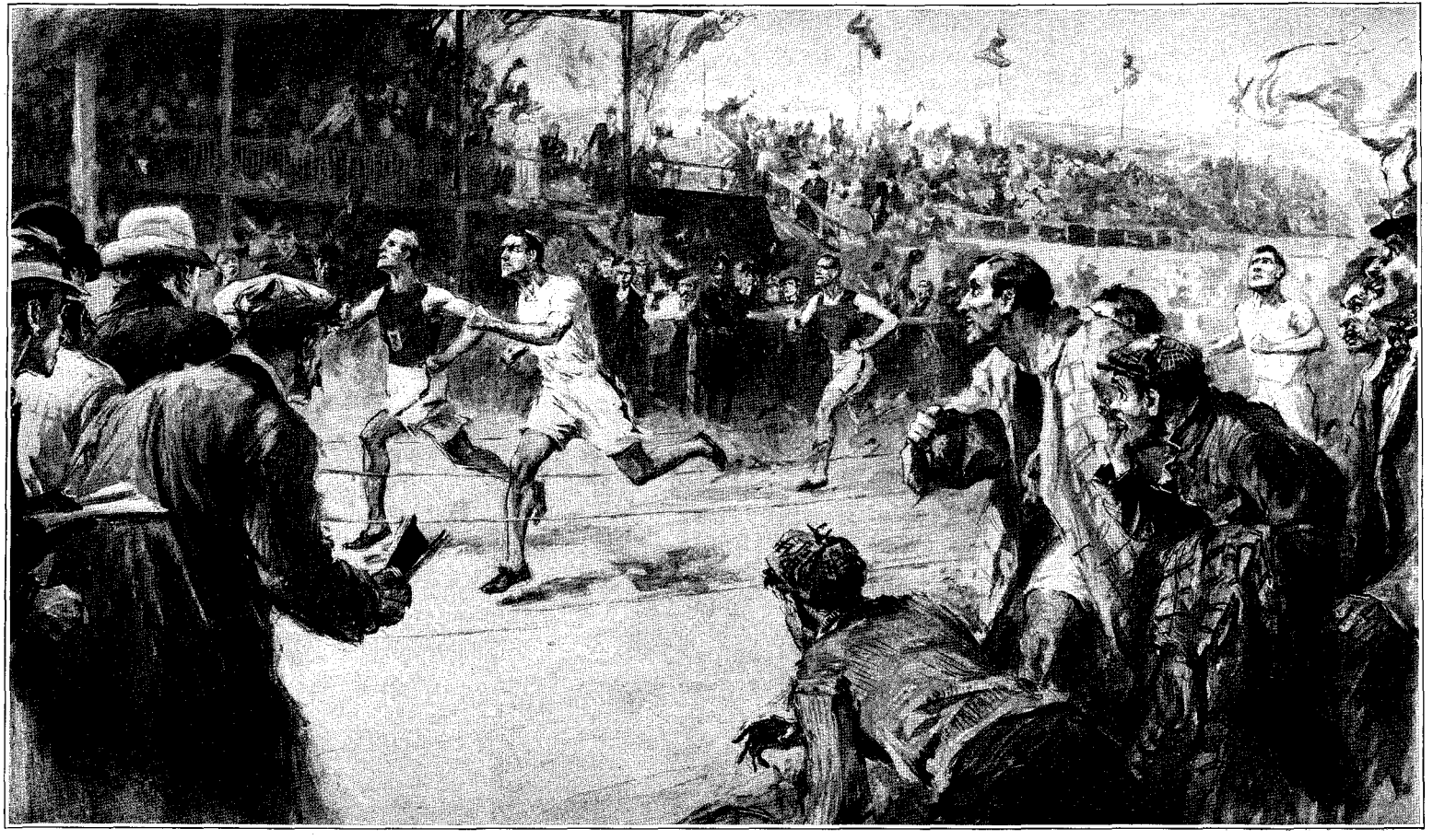

Drawn by F. C. Yohn.

"I could feel the taunt in that yell, and into my soul it came."—Page 698.

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It was the gaffer. He took a seat, pulled out his pipe and then put it back. "Excuse me, Ned, I forgot—for the moment I was fancyin' the running was over."

"And isn't it as good as over?"

"Well, m—m—yes—though you're a man that's likely to do anything in a pinch. I've great faith in you, Ned."

I knew something of my old gaffer's weakness by this time. Any friend of his was a fine fellow, so I passed that over.

He was now regarding me affectionately —"But what's wrong with you? You're not yourself at all. Come, come, Ned—we mustn't let it take such a hold of you. Hold out a while longer—maybe I'll have good news for you in the mornin'."

My mind at the word "news" was far away again.

"Good news of what?"

"Oh—h—I've been doing some investigatin'. And a man whose description fits your gambling friend Fifield, that you told me about, is here and doin' business, though not under that name." Long before this I had told the old gaffer of the race with the Australian and the after-loss of the two thousand dollars.

"But did you see this Heddon run today, Ned?"

"No, I was being rubbed when he won that heat from Rowden."

"Well, take a light-haired man of five feet ten, thick-set, heavy calves, specially long in the back, a quick starter, high knee and strong arm action—who would that remind you of?"

It did not come to me till then—yet I was hardly surprised. Perhaps I was too loggy with ale to be much surprised. Perhaps so. "That would fit the Australian who ran me for the American championship."

"Well, that's 'im—but no Australian. That's Heddon—and your friend Fifield's got him under lock and key at the Swan. I must say they planned it well—and stand to get a pot of money—and a good bit o' mine and yours they'll get at the same time. 'Tis Fifield will get most of it, too. He was in drink to-night, and said a lot. He's no love for you."

"And why not—did he say?"

"H—m—m—hints, hints. But suppose 'twas him was behind Heddon when you beat him in America? And suppose—suppose, then, Ned—suppose he's in love with your wife?"

"He *was*—wanted to marry her—but he's got over that."

"How d'y know he's got over it? Suppose he figured he could keep you over here with not money enough to go back home, and she over there with not money enough to buy herself and the little girl bread! How then?"

"You surely do imagine things, Guv'nor."

"Maybe so—maybe so. And maybe I'm only imaginin' he led you into that gamblin' joint where you lost your two thousand! But you're tired, lad. You're up too late as it is—after eleven o'clock—go to bed. And lock that back door. However came it open, anyway? I told Angus never to leave it open. If I see him anywhere I'll send him up to keep you company. You'll make what you can of it, to-morrow, won't you, Ned?—and then a fine lay-off. And mind" —no moaning over the good thing that was being snatched from us, but a fine, warm smile from the old fellow—"mind, I may have great news for you to-morrow. Good night, Ned."

Great news? Heddon disbarred? No, they could not do that. His running under another name abroad could be no cause for disqualification, even if we cared to play that game, which we had no mind to. They would have to let him run now—and all bets would go at the post—and we would take our medicine.

My head ached. What was the old man's notion of Fifield trying to keep me from my wife? Queer things came into the gaffer's head—the most suspicious man at times.

I leaned out of the rear window. I could hear the voice of the bar-maid whenever she went into the kitchen. Also I could see her shadow against the white fence in the yard. Presently I could hear the old gaffer's voice below. A few minutes and I heard him say "Good night," and, a moment later, his steady old step going up the side street.

Good old gaffer! Poor old Ned King! Ned King, you poor slob! I drew the blanket up from the floor, reached under the bed and held a bottle up to the light.

I had a thought that the sight of the ale would make me forget my backer. But it did not—not quite. "I told 'em all I

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didn't care if 'e 'ad twenty-nine instead of nine yards—when Ned King gets after him those nine yards will shrivel up like thin-cut bacon on a hot grill——" I could see him in the bar of the Swan defying all who might care to contradict.

Good old gaffer. And he trusted me. And he had given me a chance; bedded and boarded me when I was down and out. And once again his money was down on me.

Aye, his money was down on me. I counted the full bottles idly. Twelve, and three gone. What a forgetful time I could have yet! And plenty more downstairs. I, who had never until to-night taken the second bottle of ale at one sitting, to-night was going to see how much a man would need to take to make a man forget.

I sat on the edge of my cot. I took pleasure in counting the bottles once more. What a time! To be sure I could. But would I? Would I now? "I says to 'em all before the bar of the Swan—not if 'e 'ad twenty-nine yards! And when Ned King gets after 'im——" Game old gaffer!

Surely I could. I drew the cork of one. The froth welled slowly up. I watched it a moment, then stepped to the wash-basin and poured it down the drain. One after the other I drew the corks and poured the ale into the basin. As I emptied them I stood them up like soldiers on the floor.

I heard the boy's step on the back stairs. In he came cautiously. His rat-like, wicked little eyes peered around the room. He looked at the empty bottles on the floor—counted them—fifteen—chuckled—"My, but you're going a gait! And all alone, too!" And then, as if assured of something he very much wished to know, ran down the stairs again. I could hear the kitchen door closing behind him.

I threw the empty bottles out of the back window. I heard them drop one after the other, on the grass in the back yard. Then feeling drowsy, dull, tired—wretched—I undressed, and was getting into bed when Angus came in.

"A bad outlook for to-morrow, Ned." He had more beer, perhaps, than was really needful for his health, and so a bit maudlin. "The Guv'nor give 'em the devil, Ned, and so did I—down to the Swan, Ned. But no use—twenty-five to one you can't win—and, of course, you can't—nor no man that ever lived or ever will live, with that hound on the nine-yard mark. Well, well, I'll be turning in here to-night, Ned—spare beds enough." I must have gone off to sleep then, for I remembered no more of Angus.

But by and by, how much later I cannot say, I thought I heard a knocking at the door; at first softly, but at length more boldly. I sat up, and as I sat up it stopped, and as it stopped the voice of Angus called out: "What is it, Ned?"

"What's it, you?" I retorted; and must have immediately fallen off to sleep again, for I heard nothing more.

III

Only three bottles, and I knew men who could have taken a dozen of that same ale and not minded it, but the sap of life had long ago ceased to run freely in them, or else their natural holding capacity was greater. I awoke like a man from horrid dreams, and had no appetite for breakfast, though I did try, under the anxious eye of Angus, to force it down.

"It can't be, Ned, you're stale from over-training. It can't be, for yesterday you were like a lion."

After breakfast I slipped down to the track, and had been cantering up and down for perhaps ten minutes, when Angus came running in. "What ails you, Ned—working like this on the morning of the finals?"

"I've got to work it off."

"Work what off?"

I made no answer to that, and he, thinking I had a touch of the sulks, said no more; and I, who had always laid out my own work, tore up and down the track till I felt I had enough.

On the way back to the hotel I slipped Angus, and, stepping into a pub, had a brandy and soda, the second I had ever taken. The first was when my wife had the baby, and I, in the next room, had to wait hours for the word. As to drinking that liquor, and drinking it when I did that morning in Sheffield, I have to say that I knew what I was doing. There is more to training than exercising or being massaged, or eating or sleeping. Ten years up to this time I had been running, studying my game and studying myself. If I was the fastest short-distance runner in the world, it was

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more than length of stride or drive of back and arm that made me so. It was more also than my brains and body. It was knowing the things which lie so deep in you that you are not able to make anybody else understand them as you do yourself. And that morning I drank my brandy and soda, drinking it, too, in the full knowledge that it is a bad thing, even one drink, when you don't need it.

My drinking it was all over town in an hour, and, joined to the rumor that I had been on a drunk the night before, caused many a good man to grieve that day in Sheffield; and also it killed any further betting on me.

At half-past eleven o'clock I was back to the hotel. At twelve I had lunch—chops, soft-boiled eggs, toast, apple-butter and tea. After lunch—one o'clock—I went to bed. The race was at four o'clock. "Call me at three," I told Angus—and was asleep, he said afterward, in two minutes.

At three o'clock I was sleeping so soundly that Angus had to shake me to wake me. At half-past three we went to the grounds, where were now forty thousand people, viewing patiently the preliminary events to keep them in humor; and they were still swarming in.

Not till I was on the mark that day did I get a look at Heddon. He *was* the man who only four months before I had run for the American hundred-yard championship. And now he had nine yards in a hundred and fifty. "Never, unless he drops dead, will you get him," was what one bookmaker said to me, and that was pretty near what I thought myself.

"So it's you, you Australian champion," I said to Heddon when I met him. "A fine champion! And a fine game you're playing with Fifield."

"Well, it's so fine a game that when we cash in after the race we'll have back that four hundred pounds we lost in America and a good many other four hundreds with it."

"You have to win first."

He laughed out loud—"With nine yards? Ho, ho, with nine yards the devil from hell won't get me."

"Maybe the devil couldn't," I says—"but 'tisn't the devil will be after you. Poor devil, he has to hop along with cloven feet and a tail flying back in the wind to handicap him even more. But with *them*——!" I held up one spiked shoe, and as he looked I flexed toes and instep, and—I couldn't help it, I was that alive with energy boiling to turn itself loose—I stood and leaped over a bench beside the track. It was a clean leap of eleven feet, toe to heel, and two fellows who had just finished a mile run were lying on it, resting. They started up in alarm. "H'I say, there, King—fancy if you didn't make it!"

"Make it!" broke in Angus. "Lie down. He could 'a made it an' you'd been tiered three high—and that's what he'll do to you, Heddon. Ned won't run this day—he'll leap the whole hundred and fifty yards. At about a hundred yards you want to listen—but you won't *have* to listen—you'll hear it—the chunk, chunk of his spikes, the same hitting the cinders so fast that you can't count 'em, and at a hundred and twenty you'll be feelin' a hot breath getting hotter every second—and then you want to watch out, Heddon, for that'll be the backmark man comin' in to his own—won't it, Neddo?"

That sounded like blackguarding, didn't it? But this Heddon was a notorious man himself at that game, and we were only taking his measure; and not all foolishness, this by-play. As I watched him now I began to see that that jump over the bench wasn't altogether a waste of energy. I knew what was running through his brain. He saw again that hundred and eighty odd pounds flying through the air. By and by that same hundred and eighty odd pounds would come flying through the air after him. When a lad and just breaking into the game, and faster men came tearing down behind me, I knew how I used to feel. I used to wish—with those champions behind me—I used to wish the tape was something nearer.

I was mad and getting madder. I could have ripped the track in two. I dug my holes, and, breaking away from the mark, breezed down past the stand. A voice there called out—an American voice—"There's your Derby winner for you—him for me."

I was beginning to feel like running, but I was not yet worked up to that nervous tension which precedes a great performance—or a great break-down. Inside of me was—I began to feel it—the power with which, by and by, would do what I willed. But as yet it half-slumbered.

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Coming back by the judge's stand I met my old gaffer, whom I had not seen since the night before. All the morning I had been wondering where he had been. I thought he would say something about the brandy and soda; but evidently he had not yet heard of it. His face was beaming.

"You're a horse, lad—a horse, nothing less. But look here"—he stepped closer—"old Parkeson's—that couldn't be bribed—he's gone home for Christmas—said in forty years he'd never failed to be home for Christmas eve—and they've bought up the substitute starter."

"Well, he'll need to be a clever one to shoot him off the mark and not me, too. When Heddon leaves the mark be sure I'll leave it with him—if I don't leave it before, so long as they're out to do that kind of work. But that fifty pounds the management's giving me for showing up—I want you to get it and lay it on me."

"To win? or for the place?"

"To win."

"Hah?"—He laid a hand on my arm—"Have ye learned anything? Is aught wrong with 'im?"

"Nothing wrong with him. He'll run the race of his life to-day."

"Then ye can't win. At nine yards ye can't win. The devil from hell couldn't do it."

"That's what Heddon said, but I gave that devil's tail a twist, and he's not so sure as he was. At twenty-five to one, I'm telling you, lay that fifty pounds on me. Will you tend to it?"

"I will. And, by heaven, a bit of my own. The fighting look's in your eye to-day, lad. And if you win—if you win, Ned——"

"If I win?—What are you smiling at?"

"Ho, ho—it won't put me in the poor-house if we do lose. But keep an eye to the starter." He ran off toward the book-makers' stand.

"And get some of it with Fifield's people, if you can," I called after him.

"All they're game for," he called back.

The starter called out to know if I were ready. Always in the big handicaps it is the scratch-man who is deferred to. He it is who has the choice of paths, who may put off his preparations till the last second. In the light of the scratch-man's privileges I made my first move. One path was as good as another, but I wanted Heddon under my eye. He had the fourth path from the pole, so I demanded the third from the pole.

The starter seemed surprised. "I thought you'd already picked your path"—he pointed to where I had dug starting holes on the inside path.

"Never mind what *you think*," I rapped back. "It's what *I do* that you have to go by. I'm using my right to take what lane I please."

I took a long time digging my new holes, so long that all, Heddon and the starter particularly, began to show signs of nervousness.

When I had finished digging my holes I stood up in them, to get the feel of them in the usual way; after which I cast off my bath-robe. Angus, in waiting, picked it up and was about to make off down the track; but I looked at him, and he dropped it on the ground again. The others now handed their blankets to their attendants, who rushed off, as Angus would have done, down the track to where they would be able to see the finish.

We were now all ready—apparently. The starter said—"On your marks"—the others got on; so did I, but last of all and very slowly. "Get set," he called. All set—but me—and waited for the gun. I could, being behind, see them, but they could not see me. I made no move to set, but watched them for perhaps ten seconds. The starter, I knew, would never dare to fire that gun till I was ready—crouched over and apparently ready at least—not with the eyes of sixty thousand people glued on us. He might be bought up, but 'twould be ruining him forever and taking his life in his hands to do that. Even at twenty-five to one, there was other money than our own down on me. Finally, he called out—"Come up, everybody—what's the matter, King?" at which I left my mark and jogged down the track.

I went fifty or sixty yards before turning back, and I made no haste coming back. The others, Heddon particularly, eyed me curiously. I paid no attention to them, except that, walking past Heddon, I said: "And you're dead sure you'll win it, eh?"

"What is it, King?" asked the starter.

"Oh—h—I don't know—nervous, maybe."

"Well, try it again." We set again. Again they bent quiveringly for the crack

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of the pistol, and again, at the instant when they were on the wrack to hear it, I stood up and, when the starter called "All up," swung down the track. This time I went a full hundred yards at almost top speed. Oh, but I was going rarely, and I made sure Heddon felt it. It was my day, and yet more than sheer sprinting power was to win this race for me.

Hankins, the pistol-firer, was plainly puzzled, and, I believe, worried by my actions, which was what I meant him to be. I had no mind to let him have that pistol-firing all to his own hand. He looked inquiringly at me as I returned to the mark, but I said nothing, only once more stood in my holes as if ready for the gun.

I watched again the backs and legs of my competitors as they crouched. They were all showing the strain. And yet again I stood up. This time I called out to Angus: "Just cinch up my shoe-lacings, will you, Angus?" and while he was bent over to it I, well wrapped in the bath-robe, whispered, "And take your time at it, Angus."

There I was warm as toast from my jogging and the bath-robe, and there they were beginning to feel the cold. Heddon darted down the track as I had been doing, but the others didn't dare get too far off for fear the starter would make them hurry back and fire the gun before they had recovered their wind.

My shoes seemed laced to suit me, and, casting off the bath-robe, I was again on the mark. This time I meant to go.

I bent leisurely at the preliminary word, yet more leisurely at the word "Set"—taking notice of everybody, but with a special eye to Heddon. All by now were plainly showing the effect of being kept waiting. It was in December, Christmas Eve, mind you, and, though a sunny day, naturally not over-warm, and men do not stay out in scant clothes, bare legs and arms and low-cut shirts without feeling it; and you want to be warm as a coal-fire for your best sprinting. And more than the cool air they had been feeling the suspense of waiting. And Heddon? I knew how his mind was working. He was wondering if I would really go this time. "I'll worry you more than that," I said to myself—"with your nine yards and your crooked play. I'll worry you—and you, too,—Mister Starter."

I was going to try something I had never tried before in a race. They called me a steady and sure man on a mark—and so I was, none more so, but many a time had I tried this in practice. "As to the wrong of it," I argued to myself—"well, it may be, but they, not I, began the game." As to any wrong done to the other three in the race, they had no chance against Heddon or me. It was I or Heddon would win this race.

Well, there were sixty thousand crazy, howling people waiting for us to go, and a starter, for all he had fired the gun at a hundred handicaps, wishing to get the job off his hands. He said "Set," and there we were, I not quite steady, nor intending to be too quickly. But at last I bent over, and as I did so put my mind in place of the starter's. "Ah—h," he was saying to himself—"At last—and now—" and here he would be taking a quick, sure glance to the others and back to me again—"All steady now——" again a look all round—"A tremendous crowd—the biggest 'cap in years—a good job almost done—and King still steady as a rock—and now——

"Steady, Heddon!" "Steady, Heddon?" And Heddon already like a marble figure! That was the tip for him. "Now, Neddie boy, watch out," I said.

Heddon's back hunched over so slightly, his knees moved. But he was not going just then. He relaxed—the others, mind you, like so many quivering rocks, as he no doubt thought I was, under the strain. I watched anew. The muscles of his back and legs began to crawl—a breath, and the heel of his front leg lifted, settled, the hind heel began to lift, l-i-f-t—a quick but full inbreath—and——

I leaped and the gun cracked. Nobody could say that I beat the gun or that Heddon beat the gun, but the starter had completed his contract. He had shot Heddon off his mark.

But Ned King was right there with him, not up into the air where a man a mile away could see, but moving out of the holes, nevertheless, and ten feet they say I cleared in that first wild leap from the mark.

"Blast you!" Angus later said I said, breaking out of the holes, but I don't remember that. I only remember that I saw Heddon before me, his back straight up, his head bobbing, his arms and legs working desperately. My back was bent over—

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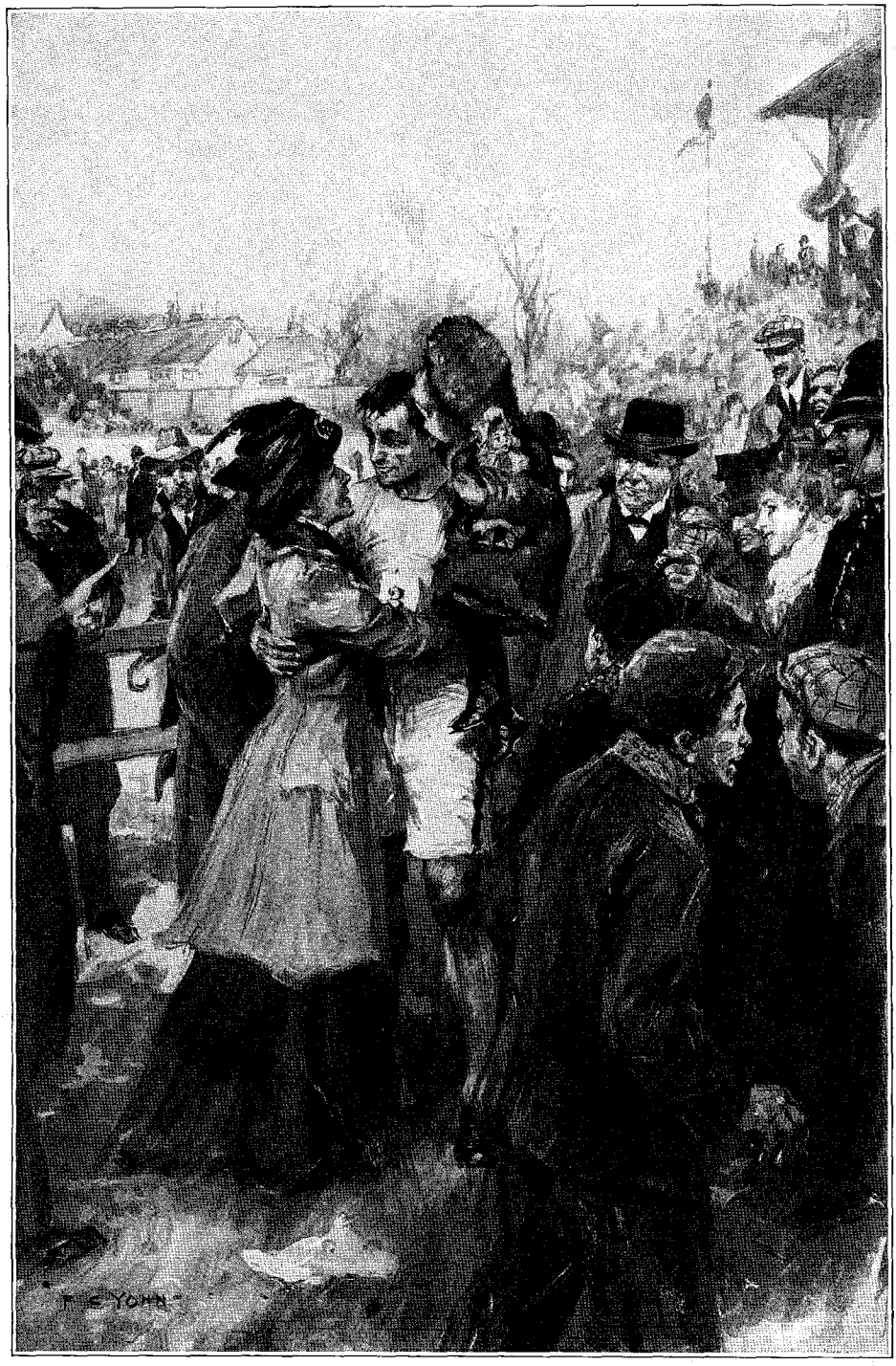

Drawn by F. C. Yohn.

"Oh, papa,—papa—" she was saying, and believe me, I didn't regret that finish.—Page 699.

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no man running carried his body or head further forward than I did; and my arms were swinging across my body, and hardly time to swing across before I had them back. My arms and back always did more of my running than my legs. Style? Style is made on a thousand practice days, not in the heat of the race. But I had style, none better, and I knew it was there to stand by me. And it was standing by me. Heddon ran high, with his legs moving like the fore legs of a trotting horse. Mine were more like the trotter's hind legs, my feet barely off the ground, but every stride well up on my toes, and a full eight feet to every stride at that after I settled down to my work. That was my job—to set my feet down and pick them up again as fast as ever I could. I hardly gave them time to hit the ground, though when they did hit it, they hit it for fair. They said afterward that a man who had to follow me down the track would have had his head knocked off with the cups of earth I threw behind. The track was a bit soft, I may say. They also said that you could hear me pounding a hundred yards away. Well, I meant to pound. I was after Heddon.

At thirty yards nobody could notice that I had gained. And maybe not. It took a few strides to get my weight and length under way; but after that nobody was heard to say that I did not gain; and gain fast. One chap with ten yards I caught at the hundred-yard post, though I only recall him dimly. I saw one man clearly in the race—Heddon—one man and one thing—Heddon and the red worsted across the track at the finish.

Heddon could run a fast hundred yards, and he ran a good hundred now. I gained no more than three yards on him, maybe four to the hundred-yard mark, which left all of five yards to make up in the last fifty. If a man can gain only four yards in a hundred, how can he ever gain nine in a hundred and fifty? It doesn't figure out, does it? No. But I could run every foot of a hundred and fifty yards. Heddon could not. Every yard that I covered saw me going faster than the yard before. He couldn't do that. He could run fast to a hundred, and there hold his speed. He could not increase it. Sprinting handicap rarely extends past a hundred and thirty-five yards, because they used to figure it out that a hundred and thirty-five yards is as far as the scratch-man can run without falling away in speed. But I knew that I could run a hundred and fifty and keep going faster and faster to the tape, on the right day, that is, and, believe me, this was the right day.

And I tore on with the same low stride and my body held forward like a rigid bar —every lift of my thigh beat against my ribs and chest. My breath was in-held, my heart pounding. And those others kept coming back to me, though, as I say, I barely saw them. But Heddon I saw. He loomed up immensely. The sixty thousand shrieking people—the insiders along the edge—I never saw or heard them. I never could see anybody in the race, anyway, but the man I had to beat. I don't know just where I passed the others, but I gave them a scandalous beating. At a hundred and twenty yards—thirty yards to go—only Heddon was before me—and he looked all over a winner. No mortal could beat a man of his speed. Four yards in thirty! But, God in Heaven, I was coming! Heddon's own backers were admitting that now. Never a man they ever saw was coming like me, they said. I, myself, did not believe then that I could win, but I still saw Heddon's back. He was still going, and going good, but, God in Heaven, I was tearing, leaping—flying, man, flying.

Ten yards from the finish and the Heddon people cheered crazily for their victory. It was as surely all over as that. And I heard that cheer. Through my ears, and into my brain, yes. I couldn't hear sixty thousand people, but I could feel the taunt in that yell, and into my soul it came—and then—then I lifted. Hope of Heaven, man, but I lifted. Back, arms, shoulders, neck, the muscles of my toes, the very scalp on my head—I gave 'em all I had. Man, but 'twas a burst.

They said I covered twenty-five feet in my last two strides. In the last foot of that last leap I got him.

That's the way I stormed at the finish; and past the line I kept on going, arms down, head up again, but my momentum carrying me clear on to the turn of the track fifty yards beyond the finish, and there at the curve I almost ran over the fence and into the people in the front row of seats, who by this time were making a run for the

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field; and it was there I almost ran into her arms—and her arms were wide open. She crying—calling "Oh, Eddie—Eddie——" and the little one laughing like mad—"Oh, papa—papa——" she was saying, and, believe me, I didn't regret that finish.

Thousands of voices were calling—some yelling—some cheering—cursing, some of them—but when I heard her voice, and the name—she alone ever called me "Eddie"—I clean forgot Fifield and the beautiful beating I intended giving him the minute after the race was over. It was almost smothered, that voice, and, I was excited, confused—even now it blurs to me—but I whirled, and stood on my toes. Being tall, I soon saw her—little as she was—herself and the little one. I shoved them right and left when they wouldn't make way, and little I cared what they might think, I lifted her off her feet and kissed her, and snuggled her—and hoisted the little girl to my shoulder.

"D' y' know what ye did, Ned,—do ye know, man?"

About this time the gaffer came running down with his watch in his hand: "D' y' know what ye did, Ned—do ye know, man?"

"I don't know, and I don't care." I said.

"Man, man, but the most impossible time—an impossible time." He repeated it reverentially.

I went to the dressing-room, leaving my wife and child to go to their hotel with my gaffer. After dressing I sneaked out of the grounds through a loose plank in the fence—to dodge the crowd—and by side streets stole up to my own hotel to get my bag. I was coming down the stairs again when I met the bar-maid. She was taking off her hat. She looked at me and I looked at her. I shook hands with her and said—"I'm going."

"I know. I saw the race—and the rest of it." There was that in her expression that made my heart bleed, but what could I do?

Out on the street I recollected the note of the night before. When I had put it in my pocket I meant to read it later. Now I drew it out and tore it into little pieces which I scattered along the gutter. I had no mind now to read it.

At the other hotel, the best in the city, in our suite of rooms, we had dinner. The old gaffer had collected all the money due us, and that money was now poured into a great salad-bowl. In five and ten-pound notes and sovereigns it flowed over the edges of the bowl, for us to look at while we ate.

I poured my share, more money than I expected to earn in years, into my wife's lap—"There's your little house in the country and something more. Forgive me those two thousand dollars I gambled away. Forgive me for leaving you as I did."

The tears stood in her eyes.

"And forgive *me*, Ned," put in the gaffer. "I do love a game man, and you're game. When you told me your story, after you'd won that second 'cap, I couldn't help writing her. And I knew more of Fifield than I ever let on. I've a friend or two in America, too. But I was afraid for the missus—afraid she'd get here too soon and interfere with your trainin'. And afraid she'd come too late and make no Christmas for you. And now that's said, there's for the kiddie." He crowded ten gold sovereigns in each of the child's hands. Money looked so common to us that when the sovereigns rolled out of her little hands, we none of us bothered to help her collect them, but let her chase them herself around the floor, under the table and chairs.

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And that night I made up my mind never to run again. That day I had beat the gun —the only crooked thing I ever did.

That side of it didn't bother my gaffer.

"Don't let that worry you—'twas you or them, with them naming the rules. But if you never run again, Ned, here's this from me." He stood up to say it. "I've seen 'em all, Ned, in the last fifty years—seen 'em all come and go—but you're the greatest of 'em all. And I'm not in wine when I say it —Ned, you're the greatest sprinter that ever laced a shoe."

'Twas worth putting your soul to the wrack to be told that by him, the best judge of sprinters and the best-hearted old gaffer in England.

That night, for the first time in most four months, I felt a woman's arm about me. And next day was Christmas.

SULLA AT ATHENS

By Rennell Rodd

He sat upon the terraced rock of Pnyx,
The dreadful victor, ruthless to avenge
His blight of nature on the blood of man,
Red-handed Sulla. The close Roman helm
Shaded his leprous visage, and his eyes
Fierce as an eagle's, watched the ruddy smoke
From low Piræus blotting out the sun,
While the mined gates fell crumbling one by one.

From shore to shore, from Sunium to Thebes,
The land lay seared and bleeding. By the quays,
Gaunt skeletons with blackened ribs adrift,
The hulls and barges smouldered. Famished slaves,
Sweating beneath the legionaries' lash,
Toiled for new masters, levelling the great walls,
The long strong arms which her Themistocles
Had stretched to guard her throne above the seas.

For Rome had spoken. And the voice of fate
Was Lucius Sulla's, and those thin drawn lips
Were pitiless as death. Vain any plea
To purge rebellion's trespass, or avert
His coldly purposed vengeance. Long, too long,
The 'leaguered folk had battled with despair:
Now gaunt with famine, silent, cowed and penned
In their doomed city they abode the end.

Only at times a train of suppliants came,—
Pale starving wives, with babes at barren breast,
Young maids with hair unbound and haggard eyes:—
Humbly afar they knelt down in the dust,
Beating their bosoms, flinging up white arms

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With prayerful palms extended. But none passed
The screen of lictors, and the hollow sky
Alone received their ineffectual cry.

And the priests followed, grave and bowed with years
Pointing the fillets on their hoary brows,
Craving his pity for the ancient fanes,
The shrines of heroes in all lands renowned;
Lest she be roused, the goddess of dread name,
Resentful of usurped omnipotence.
Unmoved he heard; he mocked not man's despair,
But their own gods were not more deaf to prayer.

Yet, ever as his captains came and went,
Or messengers with streaming brows rode in
To lay their tablets on his knees, a voice,
Low but insistent, hushed and yet again
Prevailing through the clamor of the noon,
Touched the reluctant mystic; a voice strange
And yet familiar, dominant to fill
The conscious soul that wrestled with his will.

"Lift up thine eyes, O victor, to the sun,
Gilding the roof of the great fane, and say
Has earth another miracle like this!
Was ever work of human hand so fair,
So throned, so footstooled! Is there any land
So holy for the memory of her sons?
Alas for man, the little dust and breath,
Created nobler than his doom of death!

"Was it not here, while still his half-formed mind
Groped in the dimness for a god to guide,
Quaked at the thunder, shuddered in the noon,
That first the living thought struck fire to light
The darkness of the unawakened soul;
Gave the quick stars an order in the sky,
Based the deep roots of wisdom, showed the way
That all men travel in her wake to-day?

"Was this not she who in the dawn of years,
The lonely outpost of the west, stood firm
When all the myriads of the teeming east
Were poured like sand upon her shores? Alone,
She bore the shock upon the crescent plain
That lies beneath yon marble peak. Alone,
Ere Rome was Rome her dauntless hundreds drave,
The baffled east back on the sundering wave!

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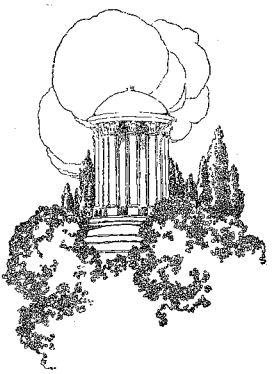
"Was this not she who, when a second time
They came in fleets that darkened all the sea,
Left roof and hearth and in light ships went down
To where yon island narrows the twin gulfs,
Staked all upon her wooden walls and sank
A thousand galleys in her furious charge,
Then from her ashes rearose like this,
Herself the trophy of her Salamis?

"Was it not here that in her triumph's hour
Men wrought the marble into forms so fair
The very gods might envy, conjured earth
Into the hues of sunset and of dawn,
Made the blood pulsate on her pictured walls,
Divined the mysteries of sound, the rhythm
Of balanced arc and angle and design
Till man's high craft grew worthy the divine?

"Was it not here,—is not the live air quick
With voices none shall silence, theirs who taught
The afterworld the sum of all it knows?
Has Rome not paid her tributary back
A thousandfold with tribute of the heart,
And worn these steps with reverent pilgrim feet?
O victor, ere the bitter day be spent,
For those she bore, for all they were, relent!"

The low voice ceased.—And now the autumn sun
Rested on far Cyllene, sank, and left
The fleeting magic of the twilight spell
On Athens in her ring of purple hills,
Throned and transfigured. In the pause of change
The stricken city seemed to sigh.—He rose
And sheathed his sword and—"Be it so"—he said,
"I will forgive the living for the dead."



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A TOAST

WITH PICTURES BY

ALONZO KIMBALL

Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen;
Here's to the widow of fifty;
Here's to the flaunting, extravagant quean,
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty!
Let the toast pass;
Drink to the lass;
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.

—*The School for Scandal.* Act. III. Sc. 3.

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Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen.

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Here's to the widow of fifty.

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Here's to the flaunting, extravagant quean.

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And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.

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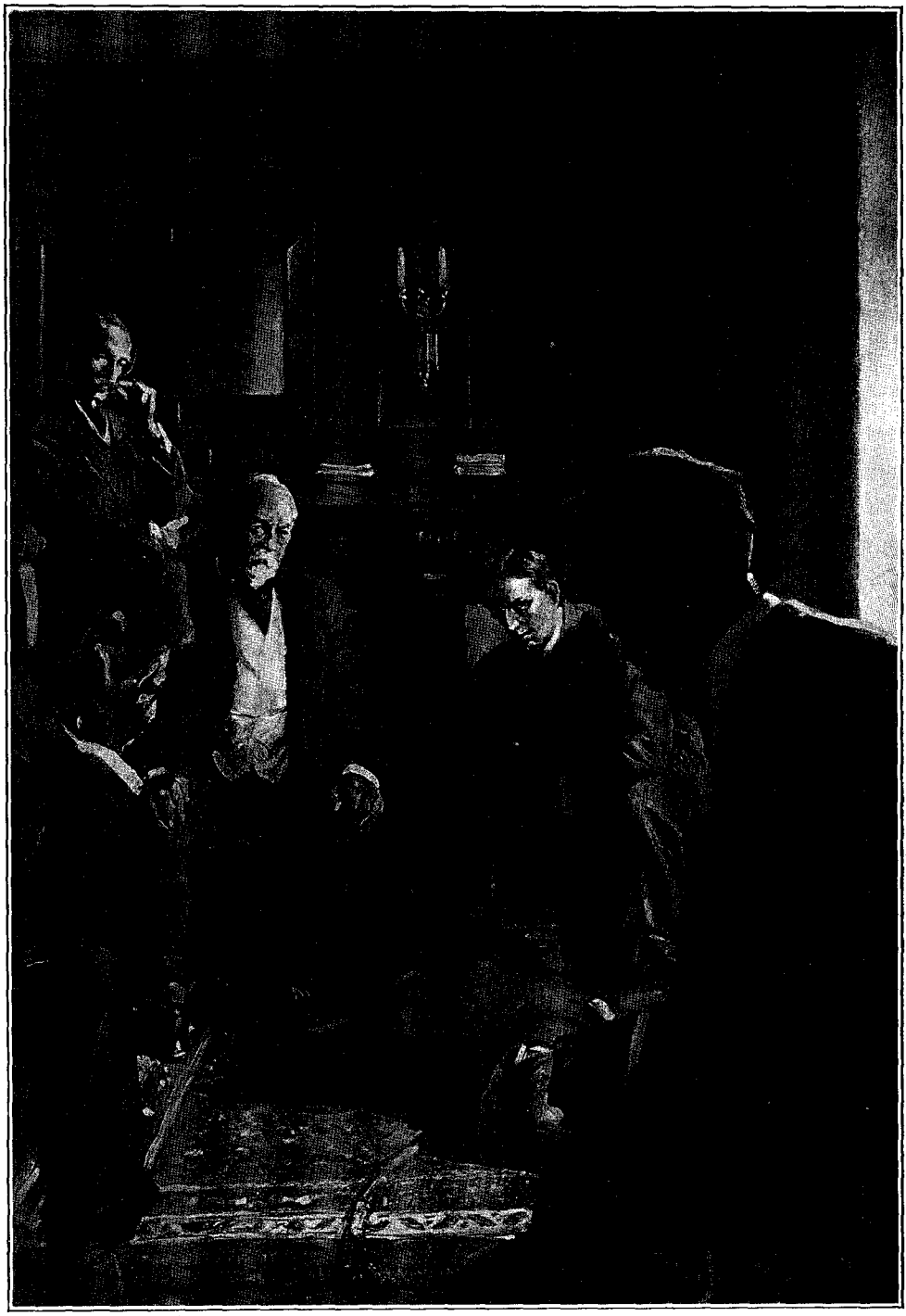

Drawn by W. J. Aylward.

He had a sudden flashing sense of being in a net that was softly tightening.—Page 719.

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THE WARNING

By Josephine Daskam Bacon

ILLUSTRATION BY W. J. AYLWARD

WELDON leaned forward slightly in his chair, his hands loose between his knees, and faced the president steadily. The moment had come. All his rehearsals of it, all his tremors, all his incredulities must end here. He felt a distinct surprise at his collected coolness, his almost amused grasp of the situation. Except for the tense, guarded muscles that a month's racking, overworked strain had left conscious of their possible trickiness, he was absolutely himself.

The president's careless glance conveyed just such a tinge of critical surprise as the occasion called for: he toyed with a slender tortoise-shell paper-cutter. The pendulum of the sombre, costly grandfather clock behind him swung tolerantly, silently; the murmur of the bank beyond them was utterly lost behind the heavy double doors and forgotten behind the bronze velvet curtains. The president's voice sounded on—he seemed to Weldon to have been uttering pompous platitudes since time began. His voice was as meaningless as a cardboard mask: how could people pay attention to him? Weldon wondered irritably.

". . . nor has it ever been my policy to render myself inaccessible to my—my corps of assistants. No. Not in the slightest degree. Our interests. . ."

Here Weldon's mind slipped softly from its moorings and drifted off on seas that soon grew tropic: should it be Bermuda, after all? Oleanders and a turquoise bay—what a relief to pavement-gritted eyes!

"Nevertheless, trivial, inconsequent interviews between one in my position and those of my—my corps of assistants who may so far forget themselves as to seek them, must always be deplored. They tend only to weaken. . ."

And yet this man had a reputation for cleverness—nay, it was no empty reputation. Did not Weldon know what he could do, know better than any living man? And yet, how he babbled! Hark, here was his own name.

"You inform me, Mr. Weldon, that you have been ten years in the employ of the bank, a gratifying but by no means unusual record. Our cashier, you know, is now in his twenty-third year, if I am not mistaken. Yes. Was it to inform me of this only that you requested this interview?"

"No," said Weldon wearily, for the president's voice hit like a dull hammer on his ear. "No, it was not for that."

"I trust, Mr. Weldon, that your mention of the fact that your salary is two thousand dollars was not intended in any way . . . was not, in short, to be regarded in the light of. . ."

"No, oh, no," Weldon murmured impatiently, trying to shake off a compelling drowsiness that threatened him.

"Because in that case . . . in that case . . . it was, I remember, only upon Mr. Bingham's urgent recommendation that it was made two thousand. The post has never carried but eighteen hundred. But your exceptional work, according to Mr. Bingham . . . I am glad to hear it is not a question of salary. I never discuss. . ."

Again Weldon's mind slipped off and this time groves of palms hovered between the grooved Corinthian pillars of the president's office, palms and frosty coral wreaths. To breathe that languid, blue-stained air!

". . . May I ask, then, Mr. Weldon, for what purpose you have requested this interview?"

Consciousness returned with a flash and Weldon straightened in his red leather chair.

"I have been waiting for some time the opportunity to tell you, sir," he said coolly, and the angry start that greeted this positively strengthened him. It was a natural start, at least.

"Mr. Deeping," he continued, with only a little catch of the breath, "what you describe as my 'exceptional work' has led me to request this interview. I believe it to be

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in many ways exceptional. During Mr. Russell's illness I assisted Mr. Bingham, and after his recovery I continued this assistance in other ways. Mr. Bingham has perhaps intrusted me with more responsibility than was in every respect wise—certainly with more than he realized. I was enabled to give him some opportune help on the occasion of the last inspection and this gave me a fairly general survey——"

"One moment, Mr. Weldon."

The president glanced at the clock and laid the paper-cutter down with a decisive motion.

"Let me suggest to you that whatever assistance you may have rendered Mr. Bingham (for which, by the way, I consider you have received ample compensation), you rendered it entirely of your own volition and, and on your own responsibility. It is quite your own personal affair. I could not for a moment consider——"

Weldon's taut control snapped short under these booming syllables.

"Damn it all!" he cried fiercely, "shall we talk here all night? This should have been over long ago. Listen to me, if you can. I have been for a month convinced that there is something vitally wrong in this bank. In the beginning I couldn't tell why. Some men have an instinct for false figures, a sort of scent for rotten conditions, I suppose. I'm one of them. I've been working at it for a month. And now I know."

The president laid the paper-cutter gently down again, and Weldon realized that he must have picked it up. As it touched the polished desk one half of it was seen to be at the least angle from the other: it was in two parts.

"And now you know, Mr. Weldon?" he repeated quietly, "you surprise me. What do you know?"

Weldon smiled approvingly at him. There was stuff in this babbler, this hypnotist, this phrase maker.

"I know that one of the cleverest frauds in the history of banking has been accomplished in this bank, Mr. Deeping, and I know by whom and how it has been accomplished. I know how Mr. Bingham has been used in the matter and how ignorant he is of the tool he has been. I know how completely the directors have been deceived and how ably the books have been doctored. I know precisely where the discrepancies are and how great they are."

"You have been very diligent, Mr. Weldon," said the president gently. "I presume you to have the proofs of all you assert?"

Weldon put his hand into an inner pocket and drew out a slip—a small slip—of paper.

"You must, of course, have a memorandum by which to check this," he said a little huskily, but meeting the older man's eyes steadily, "so I made it as condensed as possible. You will understand it, however, I am sure."

Without a moment's hesitation the president put out his hand and took the slip. Weldon touched his thumb and it was like an icicle. For a brief space he studied the close, tiny figures, then he raised his eyes from them.

"You are to be congratulated, young man," he said, pausing slightly between his words, "on the possession of a very keen mind and abilities far from ordinary. I believe you said you had no assistance in all this?"

"I did not say so," Weldon replied, "but it is true."

"And no confidants, I infer?"

"Absolutely none."

"It would be idle," said the president, "to assume ignorance of your motive in obtaining this interview."

Weldon bowed in silence.

"I will merely inquire of you what guaranty I have, in case I arrange for the purchase of this slip from you, that the terms will be final?"

"Only my word to that effect," said Weldon composedly, "which I do not think I have broken since I was eighteen. Also the fact that I intend to leave the country—finally, to the best of my belief."

"But you must have a duplicate of this slip?"

"None. I have a mass of rough memoranda, from which I could after some trouble reconstruct it, but this I should destroy. After that, unless I had free access to the bank, I should be helpless. And in six months, barring accidents, you will be able to set everything straight: you have left the way open admirably."

The president folded the list small, and

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pushing aside the tail of his frock-coat, put the square of paper into his hip pocket—an odd selection, it seemed to Weldon.

"And where did you say you were going?" he inquired, in his perfunctory voice.

"I did not say," Weldon returned, marvelling at the man's control, "but I am going South somewhere."

"No," said the president quickly, still pushing the list deep into his hip pocket, "you are not. You are going to die, Mr. Weldon," and something shone in his hand on the flap of the pocket.

His elbow was crooked back; his muscles were those of an elderly man, not quite coördinated with his tongue. In a breath, a space too short for thought, Weldon flung himself across the gap between them and drove his head and shoulders straight at the rounded, broadcloth vest: under his impact the elaborate swivel-chair slipped, swayed, crashed to the ground, and they went down together, Weldon's weight on the bent arm.

He raised himself cautiously, hands pressed on the fat shoulder under him.

"The old fox! The old fox!" he muttered aggrievedly. "Shoot me, would he? Murdering old fox!"

There was no heaving in the heavy body under him, but he was not to be easily hoodwinked now—he had had a taste of the man's mettle. He held his breath and listened: the clock ticked tolerantly, wealthily; the flames flickered in the open, sea-coal fire; there were no other sounds at all.

Reaching with infinite care around the relaxed portly body he felt for the hip pocket and drew out the small revolver, then sprang quickly backward.

"Get up, Mr. Deeping!" he said softly, "get up, sir, some one may come."

But it seemed that for once the president was indifferent to appearances, for he did not move, but lay as he had fallen, with one bent arm. Weldon walked over to him and lifted the coat-tail from his face. Then he perceived that it was improbable that Mr. Deeping would ever get up again. His face had long been a mask, but never had it been colored in this way, and Weldon knew that the artist responsible for that tinting never worked on any subject but once.

Between two ticks of the clock, it might be, Weldon saw himself leaping to the window, pouring water from the inner lavatory, calling for brandy, loosening the collar. So vivid was this vision that it seemed he must be doing all this, actually, and he stood vacant-eyed, staring at the dead man. Once he tried to take a step, but his very muscles seemed paralyzed, and a voice, steady as the clock, seemed to tell him:

"How senseless! The man is dead. Dead. You know it. Let him alone. Think what to do. How can you escape? Think! Think!"

Suddenly his mind cleared and he laughed shortly, with relief. He had felt literally guilty. But he had not killed the president. It was the president who would have killed him. What had he done but protect himself? If the shock of his defensive lunge had done for Mr. Deeping, how could he help that? The man's time had come, that was all. And it was a quick death, a good way. He moved toward the body again and tried to lift it, but had not the strength. He could not do it decently. The revolver was still in his hand, and with a quick exclamation he pushed in into the hip pocket again, considered a moment, took it out, felt for his folded list at the bottom of the pocket, got it, and restored the revolver. Moving toward the little mirror in the lavatory, he straightened his tie, wiped his face, then stood, thinking, between the body and the door.

Curiously enough, the figure on the floor hardly disturbed his consciousness. It was difficult for him to take Mr. Deeping seriously, even in death. He had always been an absurdity; posturing, phrase making, repellant. Death conferred a dignity, he had supposed, but death had not done this for the president. Another time-worn superstition, that: humanity had invented so many. Suppose all those old ideas should turn out, on the event, to be as threadbare and empty? Remorse, for instance? Would one dishonesty, one violent break with the canons of honor, never repeated, *oh, surely never repeated!* tincture all the future with a slow, spreading black drop? If so . . . but why imagine it? It was unlikely. A whip in the closet to frighten the timid children. . . .

He shook himself briskly. A clever business, to stand philosophizing, with a dead man in the room, and all his work to do!

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Now, what was the next step? To see the directors? There was Webb; would he be clever enough for Webb? And yet, if Webb had not been able to detect the frauds that juggled along under his nose, how should he not be a match for him, when he *had* thus detected them? It would certainly be to Webb's interest to keep this quiet till they could straighten it all out. Then they could divide what the president would have got. And nobody would be a penny the poorer. It was absurd to call it a crime—if the event proved successful. And it would be more than absurd to refuse him the reasonable amount he would ask for: the gain would far exceed his, even if five of them should divide the whole.

Stop a moment! Suppose he could confront them with Deeping's own memoranda? Suppose he should control the material the president must have had ready, in case . . . why, he must have an incredible sum by him, all ready at a moment's notice, something he could convert in an hour into cash, before he fled. He kept the revolver: he would have kept this. He was ready for anything. His pockets. . . .

Weldon pushed aside the coat flap, but his hands refused the further motions. To go through another man's pockets! And yet Deeping had done worse than this: what sums had he not twisted and turned, added and subtracted, borrowed and replaced? But not an actual pocket. No, no. He cursed himself for a weak fool, but the pockets he could not touch. The spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh, tyrant after years of honest, deep-indenting habit, travelled its accustomed grooves and would none of such muscular innovations. Well, he must take his chance with the Board. He flung open the door and seized a brass-buttoned official of many years' inferior but faithful service.

"Run," he muttered, "run, Henry, for Mr. Dupont! Mr. Deeping has had some sort of stroke. Get him and call a doctor quickly—don't make any row now about it, you understand. I'll stay here."

The man touched his cap and hurried off and Weldon stood nervously by the door. A minute passed, two minutes. Suddenly he turned, slipped the ornate brass bolt above the Yale lock, stepped quickly to the dead man's side, and went with rapid, tactful fingers from one pocket to another. The clock ticked leisurely, and unconsciously he muttered, counting the strokes,

"Seven, eight, nine . . . he must have them here. . . ."

A low knock at the door caught his strained ear. His hand held a thick timetable; *New York, New Haven and Hartford* stared him in the face. The leaves fell apart as his hand for the first time shook, and between them—ah! there they were! "Memoranda, etc.," was written on the top paper. Thrusting the slender sheaf into his pocket, he threw the timetable on the desk and drew the bolt slowly, peering out between the bronze curtains with caution.

"How is he—gone?" whispered Dupont, the dead man's brother-in-law, tiptoeing across the room. "Heart, I suppose. Henry's called the doctor, but he said he guessed it was no good, from your face. Nobody has an idea of it—you managed very well, Mr. Weldon."

He glanced at the body and said a few perfunctory words.

"Well, well, we all have to go. Sixty-one, I think. Has any one sent for Webb? I think Webb should be sent for."

Weldon glanced curiously at the mild, unimportant brother-in-law. He was always thought of and mentioned in his capacity of brother-in-law. Why should he think of Webb? Common-sense answered, why not? He was immeasurably the head of them all. Opening the door to discover if there were yet any disturbance in the bank, he confronted Potter, a fat, red-faced, many-millioned man, who puffed excitedly by him.

"Terrible thing, isn't it, Dupont? Great shock to you. Naturally. Has—has Webb been informed? Quite right, quite right."

He dropped into a chair and wiped his pink, fat forehead, looked once sharply at the body on the floor, then obstinately at his knees. He appeared very excited to Weldon; more so than the death of his associate could properly explain, perhaps? No, no: what folly! Probably it made them all feel rather shaky—overfed, weak-hearted old fellows, all of them. They saw their end.

A soft tap on the door followed, and as

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the two older men looked with one accord at Weldon, he pushed aside the portières and admitted Mr. Fayles, a thin, aristocratic, iron-gray man, who made himself one of them without a word. Stepping to the body he looked a moment, then sank into the chair Weldon had occupied during his interview, fitted his gloves into his top hat, dropped it beside him, and with an extraordinary convulsion of countenance buried his face in his hands. After a moment's annoyed contemplation of his motionless figure, Weldon met Dupont's eyes inquiringly. The brother-in-law shook his head, no wiser, evidently. Weldon gestured imperiously toward the fat man, and Dupont tiptoed over to him, whispering hoarsely, "I didn't know he was so attached to Edward, did you, Potter?"

Potter pressed his puffy hands together till they streaked red and white.

"Good Heavens! Good Heavens!" he burst out, "this is awful! Where can Webb be?"

Dupont stared, then shrugged his shoulders vaguely and returned to his seat. "I really didn't know he was so attached to Edward," he murmured to Weldon confidentially.

They sat in silence. The president's great bulk stretched among them like some sleeping, foreign animal in a zoölogical garden. It was like a funeral; the funeral of some associate, attended with perfunctory punctiliousness. The blow was financial, not human; it was the death of so much bank stock.

Another knock. Again Weldon, recognized master of ceremonies now, opened the door, this time for the doctor. It was the president's own doctor; Weldon wondered why it was that important men's doctors were always to be got so quickly. Did they have a secret call in the event of a bank president's death? What would happen in case one were called from the birth, say, of another bank president's son? Imagine the doctor's state of mind . . . he shook himself to dissipate such idiotic thoughts: his mind worked as the mind of one in a worried, hurried dream.

"Good-day, gentlemen, a sad errand for me," said the doctor gravely. "Ah, yes, a little more light, please? Ah, yes. Instantaneous, of course, Half an hour, forty minutes, I should say? Ah, yes. I supposed so. Any one present . . . any shock or excitement?"

Weldon spoke briefly. He had been discussing bank matters with Mr. Deeping. He had mentioned a few of the matters in discussion when Mr. Deeping had put his hand into his pocket, appeared to sustain some stroke, slipped back in his chair, and fallen dead-weight on the bent arm. Just as they saw him. It was impossible to move him, except to free him from the chair. He appeared to have died instantly. It had been made known immediately.

"Ah, yes," said the doctor. "Just as I expected. I warned him of it. Not a month ago. A great loss to the community, gentlemen. All the arrangements, now . . . Mr. Dupont, I suppose you . . . or if you had rather that I. . . ."

"If you would, please," said the brother-in-law gratefully, "I am bad at that sort of thing—I—my head——"

"Ah, yes. Perfectly natural. I will have the body removed, then, as soon as possible——"

"Not till Webb gets here!" Potter broke out, twisting his hands convulsively, "wait for Webb. I insist on Webb!"

The doctor stared.

"Mr. Potter, I believe?" he inquired courteously. Then turning to the others generally, "Do I understand that there is any reason——"

"No reason at all," Dupont interrupted irritably, "not the least. Webb will be informed, fast enough. If you are kind enough, Doctor——"

It was obvious that he dreaded the chance of any personal responsibility. What a rabbit of a man he was! Weldon remembered suddenly that a night watchman had been dismissed for saying that Mrs. Dupont blew her husband's nose for him! One could almost believe it. Hear him, now.

"Mr. Fayles will, I am sure, agree with me——"

"With you? With *you?*"

Mr. Fayles's voice was hollow, tortured. His face was wet. He turned his red-rimmed eyes on the man before him.

"What in God's name are you?" he said ferociously. "Wait for Webb, of course."

His head went back in his hands and they stared at one another. Fayles, the cold aristocrat. Fayles, the unruffled!

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The doctor's glance settled finally on Weldon, as a possible clew to the situation.

"This is—this is—we make every allowance, of course," he began, "for such an unsettling occurrence. Of course. Mr. Webb, of course, would naturally . . . and yet I hardly like the idea . . . it seems. . . ."

There was a strange sense of tension in the room, not to be accounted for by that dead creature on the floor. No, there was something else. Weldon with difficulty repressed a smile. That fool of a brother-in-law knew nothing, clearly. Potter was merely irritable and at sea generally, he was sure. He could swear that whatever alarmed Potter alarmed him only through Fayles, whose collapse was unprecedented. Did Fayles know? Impossible. Fayles stood for old-fashioned, delicate scruples, finical standards. "As straight as Joseph Fayles," they said. And yet, why. . . . He remembered that he had not yet answered the doctor. How his thoughts ran away with him!

"Mr. Webb's connection, of course," he murmured, "principal director, you might say, made it natural to lean on him . . . to depend . . . undoubtedly he would have been notified. Probably if the doctor were to send for the body, Mr. Webb would have got there before, and his colleagues be satisfied. They depended on his judgment to such an extent. . . ."

The air of the room seemed to tighten round them. That doctor was no fool. He must feel something—what, how much? He pursed his lips.

"Just as you like, of course," he said briefly. "It would seem that there can be very little difference in judgment as to the expediency of burying a dead man, however. If that is what you mean. I will do as this young man suggests. These matters, of course, have a certain formality. There are precedents. . . . Ah, yes. Good-day, gentlemen."

He looked toward the door, which Weldon, in his capacity of master of ceremonies, opened for him, and passed out, drawing a deep breath as he crossed the threshold and hurrying, it seemed to Weldon, down the corridor. Did he want to be rid of them? It seemed so.

There they were. All the directors but Webb. All that counted, that is. One would imagine it a meeting of the board. Then why was he here? Suddenly he lost himself in a great yawn, and realized that he was dying of sleepiness. Neither last night nor the night before had he closed his eyes.

"As there seems nothing more for me to do, gentlemen," he said abruptly, "I think I will go now. There is no more assistance——"

"Wait for Webb," cried Potter nervously, "wait, won't you? I—I insist on it!"

One felt really sorry for this rich, fat man. How ludicrously he resembled his caricatures!

"I really wish you would wait for Mr. Webb, Mr. Weldon," Dupont assured him, "it would be a great convenience. You could tell him just how it happened, you know. Just. You see, your being there, you know. . . ."

"Of course I will stay, if you desire it," Weldon answered gravely, wondering if he could keep awake. His eyeballs fairly dragged down. The tall clock's tick confused itself with his thoughts: *one, two! one, two! one, two!* Suppose he were to run now, with the "memoranda, etc.," and take whatever Mr. Deeping had been going to take? That was folly, if the rest didn't know. Then he would be a common criminal. If they did know, then he could leave his memoranda slip and they would understand and make up the sum amongst them. Let Webb and Potter fork out, for once. Let them bleed the depositors. *One, two! one, two! one, two!* Why not? why not? why not? His eyes fairly closed for a second.

But a soft click of the door opened them. There was no knocking here. The curtain moved and Mr. Webb was in the room. Involuntarily they rose to meet him, and Fayles for the first time took his hands down. Tall and unnaturally thin, his sallow cheeks framed in lank, sandy hair, his eyes turned down, it was hard to realize that this almost slouching fellow held the attention of the shrewd in these matters as the certain head of them all, when the present great leader should have dropped his sceptre. But this was the Webb in whose labyrinthine meshes the cartoonists delighted to picture the unhappy flies of their country's financial system; this was the weaver whose warp was of railroads

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and his woof the unhappy populace, in yet other pictorial fancies. This was that Webb before which many patient Penelopes had sat through many Sunday editions, dressed in stars and stripes, a sorrowing, perplexed America, and gaped to find it unwoven by day, though thick patterned with rich promises in the evening.

"All over, is it?" he said in his dry, sceptical voice, "too bad, too bad."

His eye shot out from its heavy lid and took them all in. It lingered on Weldon.

"This the young man with him at the time? Sudden shock, eh?"

Weldon told his story again. They had talked of business. The president had put his hand in his pocket. Handkerchief, probably. Had experienced some shock and fallen, dead-weight, on his bent arm. As you see him now. Unable to lift him. Notified Mr. Dupont immediately. Nothing more.

"Dear, dear!" said Mr. Webb. "As quickly as that! Hard on you. Nothing handy, I suppose; only window up and water and such things?"

For the life of him Weldon could not help the slow red in his face. He glanced at the window: it was locked. For Heaven's sake, why lie? He was no murderer. And yet—any one, *any one* would have opened that window.

"I did what I could," he said in a low voice, "but it was plain that Mr. Deeping was dead. He never drew another breath."

"No brandy about, I suppose?" pursued Webb.

But Potter interrupted.

"For Heaven's sake, Webb," he implored, "let all that go! He's gone. You know he never touched a drop of anything. Of course there was no brandy."

"Of course," Weldon interrupted, relieved. Every one knew the president's views on that subject: he had forgotten them.

"Of course," repeated Mr. Webb softly and glanced again at the window. An intense irritation flared up in Weldon: this man flicked him on the raw with every syllable.

"If you have no further use for me, gentlemen," he began, but Webb waved his thin, small-boned hand negligently.

"One moment, Mr.—Mr. Weldon, I think? What business did you say you were discussing with my poor friend?"

Mr. Fayles took a quick step and grasped his colleague's arm.

"For God's sake, Webb," he muttered huskily, "look at us! Where are we? What's to be done? They've sent for the body by now."

Potter seized the other arm.

"Will you tell me what all this means, Webb?" he blustered, "what's the matter with Joe Fayles? Is it possible that—is anything——"

Webb's lids lifted and the snake-like swiftness of his glance at Fayles was not lost on the others.

"If Mr. Fayles," he began slowly, "has occupied himself in spreading the disquiet he has endured since he discovered (and imparted to me) the fact that my poor friend here carried a revolver about with him, he has done a mighty foolish job. That's all I have to say."

Even Dupont was alarmed now. It was with a grim amusement that Weldon watched them all. Dupont suspected Potter, was staring malevolently at him and chewing his slight moustache nervously. Potter never took his eyes from Fayles, whose clutch on Webb was the anguished clutch of the drowning man that has caught at sea-weeds. They seemed to Weldon like actors in a play, and he was the spectator. He observed them from his red plush seat, almost despising them for the entertainment they gave him. How absurd they were, with their dead president and their suspicions. They were mad to get at the pockets—he knew! But they hadn't the nerve. And Webb, crafty old Webb, was holding them in like dogs on a leash.

"Did he really carry a pistol?" he said gently, "let's see."

He leaned over the body.

"I wonder why he wanted the pistol pocket?" he went on casually, "any idea, Mr. Weldon?"

A tiny, fine chill tingled at Weldon's heels and flew up to his hair. He had a sudden flashing sense of being in a net that was softly tightening. In an agony of regret he wished that he had not that sheaf of "memoranda, etc." It was suddenly clear to him that he had stolen them.

"I have no idea, sir," his tongue answered stolidly.

"No, . . . of course not," said Mr.

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Webb thoughtfully. "Well, gentlemen, I can't see the need for any more discussion. This is very deplorable—a great shock. He was very methodical and no doubt everything is in easy shape. . . ."

They drew close to him and Weldon, though he caught the murmur of voices, distinguished nothing but the steady notes of the clock: *one, two! one, two!* His head nodded a trifle and for one blissful second his eyelids fell. The clock began to strike eleven. *One!* he struggled, but it was too sweet. *Two!* He became dimly conscious of a rustling and movement by him. *Three!* there was a light touch on his arm and Webb stood near the chair he had dropped into. The others must have gone.

"You seem exhausted, Mr. Weldon," he said quietly.

"I—I have missed my sleep lately," Weldon stammered, trying to control the motions of his mouth, his voice striking his own ear as mechanical, far away, labored.

"Exactly," said Webb suavely.

"And now, Mr. Weldon, how much do you expect for those papers?"

Part II

Weldon drew his chair across the broad veranda in an aimless, leisurely way, anchored it in the shadow of a wicker table laden with cool glass pitchers and iced fruits and sank into it, sighing restlessly. The pillars of coral that supported the veranda roof framed, each pair of them, an oblong of sapphire bay; vivid masses of pink oleanders hedged the foreground; the tremulous sapphire crawled softly over a creamy crescent beach. In the pleasant noon stillness the mild whine of a patient puppy broken by the chuckles of some young human thing rose on the air. Jars of sweet flowers sent out their almost tropical odors with each tiny, invisible wind-current: they seemed to puff it into his face.

A great green and flame-colored parrot, hung head downward in his yellow cage, began suddenly a mechanical, dry, litany: "*Mañana! mañana! mañana!*" It was like a clock—passionless, regular, meditative. Weldon shrugged his shoulders distastefully; he had never been able to conquer his dislike of steady, measured sounds. It was an unreasonable weakness, but incurable. He twisted uneasily in his white flannels as the bird droned on,

"*Mañana! mañana! mañana!*"

"Be still, Chico, be still, sir!"

A fair, finely grown boy took the coral steps two at a bound and threatened the parrot.

"Daddy, keep him quiet, won't you? He frightens my white mice awfully. Why do mice hate parrots? Do you know, daddy?"

Weldon's face cleared and he threw his arm over the slender shoulders.

"I don't know, Pippo, I can't guess," he said. "Where's your mother?"

"Just beyond you," and the boy slipped away to his pets, grudging the time for her kiss in passing.

She stood softly behind the wicker chair and laid her hand on his forehead. Her lips were only a little smoother.

"Still troubled, dearest?" she asked him in her pleasant English voice. "Still dreaming?"

She was very fair, with reddish lights in her thick, low-growing hair, and brown, broad eyebrows. Under them her eyes shone, a frank, dark blue; she bore a curious likeness to a colored print that, pinned to his dark hall bedroom in his first days of dull clerkship, twenty years ago, had smiled over his narrow bed and set his ideal of dear and loving women forever. She had even the same small dimple at the left of her mouth.

She slipped to the floor beside him and laid her head in her wifely English way against his knee.

"I'm so sorry it bothers you, Phil," she murmured, her cheek against his hand. "One would think you were a superstitious boy, you silly! Hear baby—he's playing so dearly with those puppies! He pats them and then pinches their tails so slyly! Oh, Ted! Oh, baby! Call to mummy!"

From the balcony above a shrill crow drowned the complaint of the puppies.

"Doesn't he say it plainly!" she cried, flushing a beautiful mother-rose. "And he is so strong, Phil!"

He caressed her absently. Ten years gone, and a dream had swept those years to one side as one would draw a bronze curtain, had opened the past as one would open a heavy mahogany door! All night a tall, carved clock had ticked, ticked

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through his dreams, *one, two! one, two! one, two!* A sinister, sandy face had mocked and probed him, a fat, animal face had irritated him, a pale, haunted face had pleaded with him. He had tossed himself awake, had listened thankfully to the soft breathing beside him, had kissed the fragrant braid across his face, and sunk again into heavy, sultry nightmare, doomed to live that shameful day through every clock-tick. And now his brain was cloudy with it. His hand lay listless on her shoulder.

A five-year-old girl, lovely as a tea rose, stood doubtfully in the cedar-wood door, poised for flight either way, sucking in the dimple at the left of her mouth. Running at his call she flew into his arms and dropped her buttercup head on his shoulder. For the first time he smiled, and the wise wife slipped quietly away and watched them from the door, guessing at their murmurs, counting their kisses. Later she disturbed them reluctantly.

"I want to say you are not at home," she said, "but I daren't quite do that, for he is from the States, dear, and it is important business. His name," dropping her eyes to the white rectangle in her hand, "is Webb. Shall I send him out here?"

Weldon put the child down from his knees and half rose.

"Yes," he said clearing his throat, "send him out here. And keep the children away."

So this was it. It had not been for nothing, that dream.

The tall, lank figure was before him, the ironical smile drooped on the tight lips. Ten years had left him as they found him, but for a thought of gray in the sandy hair.

"Sit down," said Weldon briefly, "what is it?"

"You've put on a little weight, I see," said Webb, nodding at the proffered chair, "but that's only proper in the president of a bank, I suppose. You've done well, Mr. Weldon."

Weldon bowed.

"You did not come to Bermuda to tell me this, Mr. Webb, I think?"

"No," said Webb, "I didn't. Ten years ago, Mr. Weldon, you called me a mind-reader when I had put two and two together once or twice, put myself in your place for ten minutes, complimented you by assuming that your course had been what mine would have been, and spoken to you accordingly. Can't you do a little mind-reading on your own account, now?"

"I confess myself unequal to it," Weldon said coldly.

Webb nodded indulgently.

"All right," he returned, "we'll take it that way, if you want to. Mr. Weldon, I don't know if you read our papers down here at all?"

"I have never opened an American newspaper since I left the country," said Weldon briefly.

"I see. I suppose you know that Blickenstern's dying, though?"

"Yes," Weldon answered indifferently, "we all know that, of course."

"Yes. Well, Mr. Weldon, I'm supposed to inherit his shoes. It's not much to you, of course, but a lot to me—and to a lot of other people, too. Now for something you don't know. In just about five days, Mr. Weldon, we're going to break through the crust and drop into the biggest panic since '93. That and Blickenstern's death—he must go soon, now—and this fearful railroad business—I won't bore you—will put me into a bad hole. A worse hole, I don't mind telling you, Mr. Weldon, than Blick's successor can afford to get into. It's all a matter of balance, now; pretty fine balancing, too, for the next week. In six weeks there'll be enough for most of us, but just now—well, there'll be dozens of us in the Street who'll be grateful for ten thousand in cash around the corner. Think of it—ten thousand! Now I'll be short. I need some money—not stage money, Mr. Weldon, real money! I wouldn't take Blick's name on paper for what I want this week—and getting it or not getting it means the top of the heap for me, or three years' fight for it. I can't afford three years. I wasn't a bank president at forty, you know."

"You mean you want the ten thousand pounds you gave me?"

"Just so. I want fifty thousand dollars, Mr. Weldon—for six weeks. I hate to do it, honestly. Nothing but this infernal panic could have driven me to this. But I'm helpless. And it's worth millions to me to have no one suspect it. I can't touch a penny elsewhere—it's all tied up. I must be able to produce it without any fuss, or disturbing the jack-straws a particle. There's no use in going into the details."

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"No use at all," said Weldon stiffly, "for it will be impossible for me to lend you such a sum, Mr. Webb, impossible. I have paid well for my position here."

"And a good move, too," said the other heartily. "You stand well, Weldon; none better."

"I have never been what you would call ambitious," Weldon went on, more passionately, now. "When you yourself asked me why I demanded no more than the ten—the fifty thousand, you remember my answer. I knew that it would buy me a good, respectable interest out here, assure me of a position I had every capacity to sustain honorably and efficiently, and give me the leisure and climate that I wanted. I shall never be a rich man—by your standards. I don't care. I thought my brains and initiative were worth what I asked, and you agreed with me. I promised utter silence and have kept my word. You promised the same and have broken yours. I can do nothing for you, even if I wished to. I'd rather not discuss it further."

"*Mañana! mañana! mañana!*" the parrot shrilled. It still hung head down in the shining cage. Weldon could have wrung its neck. It was worse than a clock. Webb sighed regretfully and raised his heavy lids. As the old snakish glance reached him Weldon felt the old net-like sensation, the old baffled rage.

"I'm sorry, Weldon, but I can't let it go. It's no use—you can't afford it. It's all like a house you build out of cards, you see, and you can't slip out one without the whole thing caving in. Whatever I pull out I have to explain. How do you suppose I got you your fifty thousand, back there? You know I've never had much money—to call money. It's brains—what you call mind-reading, you other fellows—that I've matched against the rest of them. And I've got them where they're afraid of me. I can't drop back. Listen to me, Weldon!"

He drew his chair close and talked low and steadily for five minutes. The air seemed to grow dense; the rustling hiss of the foam on the creamy beach was the hiss and flicker of a sea-coal fire; the grotesque shadow of the wicker chair, black on the white veranda floor, was the spread, silent bulk of a dead man.

The low voice ceased.

"How about it, Weldon?" it added abruptly, "can you afford that?"

Weldon pushed away his chair roughly. "Come down to my room at the bank," he said.

Hours afterward he dragged himself into his bedroom, an older man by ten years than when he had quitted it. His body seemed heavier, his face hollower, with pinched lips and sunken eyes. The man who waited on him stared openly and mentioned the doctor, only to receive a curse for his pains—the first he had ever heard from his master.

In the late dusk his wife found him asleep in a long chair with an empty decanter beside him and heavy rugs dragged up to his chin. They tried, both of them, to make that nervous chill account for the change in him, but she watched him narrowly and he felt her eyes day and night.

Something tolled like a bell in him and never stopped for a moment: *six weeks! six weeks! six weeks!* all his waking movements went to that intolerable rhythm; he was like a man under a gallows, with a reprieve coming to him, at the mercy of all the elements. It was observed at the bank that he worked harder and longer and much alone: they said the American blood was coming out at last, and smiled at each other.

"Only mind you don't engage us in speculations, old man," said one of his colleagues jocosely, "'safe and sound,' you know! Look at the States—a pretty mess that!"

Weldon turned on him in a fury of anger.

"Speculation! speculation!" he cried harshly, "you know that I hate it like hell!"

They were genuinely anxious about him.

One morning he found his wife in his dressing-room, white faced over something in her hand.

"Philip! Philip!" she whispered and clung to him.

He put the shining little steel-eyed thing behind him.

"My dear, don't be foolish," he said quietly, "if I have my reasons for wishing a certain sort of protection for a few days, will you make me regret my sparing you?"

"You—you mean the bank?" she gasped.

"What else could I mean?" he said steadily, and in some quaint woman's reasoning she was appeased.

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At the end of three weeks the strain eased a little. He read a letter from Webb with a grim smile, bought an American newspaper, and passed an entire day away from the bank. His wife held her breath as she watched him, but affected not to notice the change, and he blessed her for it: his nerves were raw. Two days, three days went by. He sent out for another newspaper and later in the day raised the tiny salary of the page who had brought it to him. In the cool of the afternoon he rode with his wife, the boy on a shaggy pony beside them, and kissed her as she turned in the saddle in the shadow of the dusk.

"You are the best wife a man ever had," he said, looking deep into her honest blue eyes, and she galloped away from him to hide her happy tears.

The next day he told the servant to bring the parrot cage back to the veranda, where the little daughter liked to have it, and grimaced tolerantly at its strident cry. "*Mañana! mañana!*"

Life is as it is, he thought, and can we hope to change it because we change? Surely not. Everything had its price, and he had really never paid the price of that ten-years-old bargain till now—he acknowledged it. Out of that blue-stained air the messenger of fate had dropped and taken his toll of youth and candor and elasticity and departed again, and now the weight was slackening from his chest and there were but fourteen days to wait.

The next day he found a second letter from Webb on his desk. To relieve him from needless anxiety, wrote the great financier, he wrote to inform Mr. Weldon that six weeks had proved too wide a margin and he promised himself the pleasure of a complete settlement six days from the date of writing. Weldon stared at the letter head: it had been three days on the way—that meant in three days—by the next boat! The letter was grave, but subtly jubilant. The railroads were subdued. Blickenstern was dead, the country hailed his successor. A foundation of millions lay firm beneath his feet.

The president left his bank early and went home on horseback to luncheon. His wife saw the husband of many days ago and asked no more of life, but sang among her flower jars.

"Will you come up to Government House this afternoon, dear? It's weeks since you've been," she said, and he smiled and promised. "I've a new frock," she confided shyly, like a girl, "and I think you'll like to see it—now."

"I'll be back before four," he told her, "a little late, but I promised one of our young fellows an appointment."

She pouted as she had used in her courtship days.

"A young man!"

"I can't disappoint him, sweetheart. Youngsters feel those things. He wants more money and I really believe he's worth it."

As he entered his private room something struck him disagreeably. He glanced about—a sea-coal fire burned in the tiny English grate. He scowled and touched a bell. Asked to explain, the page confessed that he had promised Mrs. Weldon to put a fire there whenever any dampness should threaten, and that to-day being noticeably damp he had kept his word. The president nodded and the lad made his escape.

In another moment a slender young man entered, with a discreet knock, and faced him. He seemed unaccountably excited—even blustering, for a young man in his position.

The president took out his watch and counted the ticks to quiet his irritation. We must be kind to the young ones—promotion means so much to them. He remembered his own successive steps, and how the blue-eyed girl in the picture had smiled on them all, above his narrow bed.

"Let us look at all this a little quietly," he said, softened already, "believe me, I want to satisfy every reasonable claim. It is to my interest——"

He caught his breath. Something in the young man's attitude as he faced him, level eyed, hands between his knees, a contemptuous smile on his hard young face, smote him to the very marrow.

"What is he thinking of me?" flashed through him. The answer came like the shot from a cannon.

"Is it to your interest to satisfy every reasonable claim on the ten thousand pounds you borrowed from the bank last month, Mr. Weldon?"

The soft lines faded from his face and two gray streaks grew around his mouth. The ticking of the watch in his hand rose

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and swelled and filled the room—*one, two! one, two! one, two!*

So this was the end. Never a night of honest sleep again. Never a free swell of the chest. To go down in sight of land, to drop just outside the fort! *All over! All over! All over!*

The young man was still talking, quickly, definitely enough, but it grew blurred as it reached his brain. He found his tongue, dry and stiff in his mouth, asking questions mechanically.

Did any one know of this?

No, only the young man. He was not inclined to be rapacious. He had an interest in a bank in Gibraltar, and two thousand pounds would establish him there. He had thought it might be worth the president's while to put him in the way of two thousand pounds—considering everything. Promotion was slow in Bermuda . . . dead men's shoes. . . .

The tongue in Weldon's mouth asked, calmly enough, how he was to be protected against further demands. The young man explained very clearly. The president had managed thoroughly well: in a few days the recent transaction would be a ripple under water. But during those few days . . . he smiled disagreeably.

The fire whistled in the grate; the bank was utterly still. They were alone in it. In one second of time years and the future itself wheeled before Philip Weldon's sunken eyes. So the black drop *had* lasted, after all, and would tint his life as long as that life lasted on earth . . . and longer? Anything was possible. Must the sordid drama play itself eternally, through the years and countries, till the final ripple hit the southern-most port of refuge? Would this man sit before a sea-coal fire in his bank in Gibraltar, frozen, his life and honor nipped at the root by the triumphant hound who had tracked down his one fault? Before God, his only one! He was white beside some others who lived and died respected. Prove the contrary, any one!

One, two! one, two! one, two! That watch. Either he was going mad or it could be heard in the street outside, it shouted so. Who was he, anyway—Deeping or himself? Who was that young man?

Suddenly his head cleared. He moistened his lips and leaned forward, the watch crystal shivered in his grasp.

"And you are going——"

"To Gibraltar," said the young man briskly. "I am glad that you——"

"No," said Weldon thoughtfully, "I am afraid you are not going to Gibraltar. You are going to die."

He pushed his hand back into his pocket and felt the precious hard little object there. His fingers clasped it, when a heavy blow sent him reeling in his chair. A pain like a knife cut through his heart and he fell heavily backward on his bent arm.

. . . . . .

His eyes opened. He drew a deep breath. A tall, carved clock in the corner struck, and a man, a lank, sandy man beside him, seemed to have said something, for his voice was in the air.

"He must have had some papers—if there is anything wrong—good God, Webb, what shall we do?"

This was a slender, foppish man, iron gray.

Weldon sprang to his feet, pulling his right arm from behind him, wide, wide awake now. He was free! He was free!

The clock struck again.

Thrusting his hand in his coat he drew out a sheaf of papers and pressed them upon Webb.

"Here, gentlemen," he cried breathlessly, "are the papers you want! And here," he threw a small folded slip on the floor, "is an explanation that may help you with them. I wish you good-day."

To get out! To get out! He burst through the portières and the door, as four men, uniformed, with a black stretcher between them, entered it from without. In the moment of his withdrawal from them he saw, as one sees a stage group from his red plush seat, Potter, panting and terrified, Fayles, anguished, Dupont dazed and suspicious, their eyes fixed on Webb, who, calm as in his own office, ran over the sheaf with his snake-like eye. Even as he nodded shrewdly, the stretcher was in the room and the group dissolved.

Weldon found his hat in his hand; he polished it furiously as he strode down the corridor. He threw himself on the outside door and as he opened it, he heard through the unclosed door of the private room, the great clock strike eleven. With a shudder he plunged across the threshold, out, out into the clean, free air.

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THE VICTOR

By Theodosia Garrison

Illustration by Henry McCarter

THE live man victorious
Rode spurring from the fight;
In a glad voice and glorious
He sang of his delight,
And dead men three, foot-loose and free,
Came after in the night.

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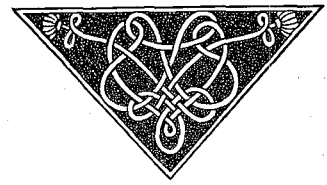
ND one laid hand on his bridle-rein—
Swift as the steed he sped—
"Oh, ride you fast, yet at the last,
Hate faster rides," he said.
"My sons shall know their father's foe
One day when blades are red."

And one laid hand on his stirrup-bar
Like touch o' driven mist,
"For joy you slew ere joy I knew
For one girl's mouth unkissed,
At your board's head, at mass, at bed,
My pale ghost shall persist."

And one laid hand on his own two hands,
"Oh, brother o' mine," quoth he,
"What can I give to you who live
Like gift you gave to me,
Since now from strife and ache o' life
Your sword-stroke makes me free?"

The live man victorious
Rode spurring from the fight;
In a glad voice and glorious
He sang of his delight,
And dead men three, foot-loose and free,
Came after in the night.



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THE RESCUE OF THE GODS

By Emerson Taylor

ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. M. BERGER

"LET me pour you a fresh cup of tea. Won't you, Senator?" entreated Miss Vaughan hopefully, as her guest hesitated. "I don't know's I ought to, Miss Sarah."

"Don't be afraid. There's plenty of it. Really," smiled the old lady a little sadly. *Was* she old—or merely tired? "Thanks to my friends," she added.

"It ain't *that*," protested Mr. Abbey, late of the Legislature, transferring his gaze a bit guiltily from the towering corner cupboard with its show of old Lowestoft to his hostess's fine and eager face, but taking in the pie-crust table at her side as he did so. "I just don't want any more tea, Miss Sarah. I couldn't." And the rattle of the delicate, cracked old cup and saucer as he set them down sounded like an emphatic exclamation point.

Miss Vaughan leaned back in her chair again, her fragile, work-roughened hands drooping into her lap. And she seemed so disappointed that, though one disappointment more or less might appear to be of small account in the life of a gentlewoman who, after a noonday of calm happiness and ease, had come to pass the twilight time in the company of poverty and sorrow, Mr. Abbey felt vaguely that he owed it to her to make amends for his failing appetite.

"I was so interested lookin' at the beautiful old furniture and things you've got here, that I kinder lost my taste for tea, I guess," he told her.

"My household gods! Well——"

"They must be worth a lot of money, Miss Sarah," he continued piously.

"Oh, more than—*that*, Senator."

"Of course. I only meant——"

"If there wasn't a Vaughan ghost mixed up with every piece in the house from the kitchen crane to the pineapple bedsteads, *I* wouldn't care a *pin* about them. But there *is*, you see," she said quite simply and positively. "In some cases, two ghosts. They make good company for me, those old Vaughan ghosts, when there's nobody like you around to keep me company, Senator. We talk together. Of the old days! When the Vaughans——"

"I understand," he said nervously. "When——"

"The Vaughans were rich," she sighed. "And—*counted*."

"I wish you was rich now, Miss Sarah. I wish there was some way to fix things—the way they ought to be."

"Maybe the Vaughans have had their turn," she answered lightly, her smile very brave. And Mr. Abbey could not tell which most to admire, his old friend who was so very poor, or the old mahogany, which could make her rich—almost.

Such furniture as filled the dusty lifeless old rooms! The kind that dealers in such things despair of finding any more; the kind that wise designers are trying now to reproduce!

"D'you know that that big sideboard of yours is worth at least three hundred and fifty dollars?" the Senator asked her, with a confession of guilt and treason in every syllable.

"Yes?" She was not a bit interested. "It came to us through Shenandoah Lee—she that married Judge Vaughan, you remember. It was sent out from England originally. . . ."

She loved them, those household gods! What tales could she not tell about them all! What of the iron fire-dogs, the court cupboard, the cradle hollowed from a white pine trunk, the musket that was carried to Quebec—the score of things belonging to the times when the colony was young? What of the splendid sideboard with its delicate inlay Mr. Abbey had ventured to value, brought North by the Virginia bride along with the quaintly embroidered fire-screens, the punch-bowl and service of Fitzhugh Nankin? From the famous Governor Vaughan himself had descended

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"I see," he replied vaguely.—Page 731.

the Georgian silver, the slim-legged card-tables, the dining-room chairs so delicately carved; the ivories, the glazes of the East which showed here and there—chessmen, Black Hawthorn, Ming—were trophies of the prosperous days when the sea-captain sons in their lean and lofty clippers bore the house flag of Vaughan Brothers from Sandy Hook to Singapore, from Minot's Ledge to Manila; the nugget of gold John Vaughan brought home from California. The letters in the old secretary, yellowed and cracked now, but very precious, bore the names of Washington and Webster, of Mazzini, of Hawthorne, of Newman, of Boz—addressed to Vaughans of Kingsford, all of them. Copley painted the smiling Lydia Vaughan, Trumbull the hawk-nosed Judge, Stuart the General in Continental blue and buff. The curious model of a telegraph instrument was given to Joseph Vaughan, the lawyer, by the inventor himself—and how the lawyer and his friends laughed together at the inventor's sanguine hopes, which none the less had something fine about them!

Treasures they were indeed, the contents of that old house at the end of Kingsford's elm-shaded street. More than that, they spelled a mute history of ten New England generations, from the time of the first settlers down to those dark but splendid days when Edward Vaughan dropped at Gettysburg and his brother at Lookout Mountain,

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to those dreary days when the collapse of the "boom" town and the mockery of the gold mine set a period at the end of the chapter—to the days when Miss Sarah was left alone, gaunt and gray and poor, with ghosts for company. The gods of her house! The memorials of ten generations of Americans who *counted!*

"What were we talking about when I—interrupted you?" she asked her guest.

Her happiness that August afternoon was in hearing about life. It was a privilege to listen to Mr. Abbey's talk—good man and true gossip, with whom, in conversation about his neighbors, discretion never hampered, if indeed it even dissuaded, a generous fancy. Such a shrewd judge, the Senator, of how far this tender annual or that hardy perennial of scandal was worth cultivating! Hence Miss Sarah's graciousness, hence the tea—though along with her hospitality to Mr. Abbey went a sense of enjoying it on her own account—a luxury long disused, like the old piano, or the cobwebbed, high-swung carriage in the stable. And there was for Miss Vaughan yet another reason for trying to prolong her visitor's stay. It was because she had plainly perceived that the Senator, though sadly at a loss how to discharge his burden, had come freighted with something to tell her which was of great importance.

"Haven't you some more news as interesting as that last piece?"

"News?"

"Gossip, then," smiled Miss Vaughan.

"I—I ain't got a *great* deal to say," he demurred hastily, fingering his empty cup. "I just looked in on you as I was passin'."

"That was neighborly." It was also palpably untrue, she was glad to guess. "But——"

"There *is*—this much, Miss Sarah," he replied resolutely. "I couldn't leave without saying it to you." As a matter of fact he had solemnly promised at least three people he would tell Miss Vaughan that which she ought to know, but which she would probably laugh at or cry over, before he dared come back; and he took the plunge. "You know the way I feel about you—the way we all feel, Miss Sarah," he went on desperately. "Friendly, you know. We like to do all we can for you—all you'll let us do, that is."

She made no reply for a moment. From their chipped and dusty frames, ruddy, white-haired Governor Vaughan and his mother, the Lydia of the Copley portrait—so young and so ready to laugh—looked down incuriously. The ticking of the tower-like old clock in the corner was so placid as to sound relentless.

"I wish we could help you more," added Mr. Abbey hopefully. "And if only you'd——"

"More!" she echoed. "Of course it's not much that your women folks keep me in food—actual *food*, Senator!" Her hands were locked tightly. "Oh, no! Or that you and the doctor and Ezra Pike make believe I'll ever pay back your loans. Loans indeed! It isn't much that you do. But—I am grateful for my small mercies, my friend. Do you know," she demanded, leaning toward him swiftly, "that if it wasn't for your charity and goodness, I'd probably die? Starve?"

"There ain't goin' to be no danger of that, I guess. You—you kind of *belong* to us, Miss Sarah. The—Vaughans, you know."

"I've often heard of a Society for the Preservation of Old New England Landmarks," she murmured, her gray eyes lighting up for a second. "Is that——?"

"No!" he cried indignantly. "It's *you* we want to help. If you'll only let us," he repeated.

"And I'm grateful. Ever so grateful, Senator. Though I know I don't half show it. Of course," she continued, "it is a queer position, Senator—for me to depend on you all."

"A hard one," he tried to say.

"*Queer*," she repeated a little impatiently. "For, of course, I ought to look to my brother."

"But you can't, Miss Sarah!"

"I've no doubt that Theodore would do everything for me, Senator if I cared to allow it. But at present——"

"Theodore!" exclaimed the Senator wonderingly. "*Him?* That reminds me," he added hastily. "I ought to've given this to you before. It's a letter from your brother himself, I guess, to judge from the writing. Miller gave it to me at the post-office to deliver. Don't mind me, if you want to read it, Miss Sarah."

"From Theodore!" Her face was all alight as she looked at the rough, feeble

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There was revealed standing on the porch a stout woman who wore very pretty, fussy clothes.—Page 733.

writing on the envelope. For an instant she made as though to open it; but then, with a little laugh, she laid the letter quietly aside.

"Don't mind me," repeated her guest encouragingly.

"I want Theodore all by myself," she answered softly.

Mr. Abbey glanced up at the photograph she kept near her chair, on the end of the mantel-piece, the picture of a young-old, slightly overdressed man of thirty-odd—a pirated edition, cheaply bound, of his older sister.

"Where *is* Theodore now?" he asked doubtfully.

Miss Sarah closed her eyes. "He has business in and near New York at present. Principally at Sheepshead Bay and Aqueduct Park—places in the suburbs," she explained casually.

"*Where?*"

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Mr. Abbey's cry of surprise won just a glance from his old friend—a lightning glance of inquiry and challenge, that softened instantly into gentle indifference.

"He writes me that a number of leading financiers are associated with him," she said. "They——"

"Oh!"

"Yes. Theodore's business is financial in its nature; not," said the old lady with delicate emphasis, "not *commercial*, Mr. Abbey."

"I see," he replied vaguely. But because the Senator was in the habit of reading every word of his New York paper every day, even to the page that contained the scores of the ball games and the other sporting news, he was, as a matter of fact, fairly accurate in the guess he made as to Theodore's probable occupation. He wondered if Miss Sarah had any inkling of what her brother was engaged in; but she gave no sign. "Financial!" grunted the Senator to himself. "Well, you *could* call it

"A debt of honor!" she whispered for the hundredth time.—Page 735.

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that, I suppose." And he recalled not without a stab of conscience how one summer afternoon he had yelled himself hoarse with the rest of the frenzied, surging crowd, when the favorite came thundering down the home stretch in a gallant dash for first place. The dust, the bright sun,

"No. Funny, isn't it?" she smiled, though there was sadness in her eyes. "But we'll not disturb *that* illusion, Senator, please."

He was speechless, trying to collect his ideas.

"If Theodore believes that the old house

Then another knock, and then— 'Oh, Sarah Jane!"—Page 737.

the colors of the jockeys, the thudding hoofs—! "Hope he's enjoying life," said the Senator aloud.

"That picture of him is less than a year old," she replied calmly. "Doesn't he *look* happy?"

"He'd look happier if he was to help his sister some. Excuse me, but, now we're talkin' about finance, why doesn't he, Miss Sarah?"

"He doesn't know I need any help. That's why."

"What——?"

is kept up as it was when his father, the late Chief Justice, was alive—when Theodore was home—we'll let him, Senator. Don't tell me that I'm ridiculous, because I know it already."

"But——"

"No!" she insisted gently, folding her arms.

"All right," he exclaimed. "Theodore's out of it, then—I supposed he would be, for one reason or another, anyhow. We here in Kingsford will do all we can for you, but that is precious little after all. Here's

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your Southern Kansas cutting and passing its dividends—there's *that* much less until better times come. Here's——"

"What are you talking about, anyhow?"

"Money," he replied crisply. "How to keep you from getting poorer than you are now, Miss Sarah."

"Ah——?"

"How to keep you—the way the Vaughans ought to be," he added proudly.

"Don't!" she pleaded, wincing a little.

"There *is* a way to do it," he went on resolutely. "And I come here on purpose to talk to you about it, Miss Sarah. It's a way three or four of us have been thinking about for quite a while."

"Thank you, Senator, truly. Home-made pickles and brandied peaches?" she inquired in an altered tone.

He waved her question aside. "It's a plan that ought to net you four or five thousand dollars at least. Probably more. And within six weeks."

"I don't wonder you've acted so uneasy all the afternoon, if that's been fretting you," she observed. "Well, Senator——?"

But before Mr. Abbey could say another word, the clatter of the front-door knocker broke in on the quiet of the old room.

"Now who can that be?" asked Miss Vaughan, slowing down her rocking-chair. Her companion had darted to the window which commanded an oblique view of the porch, and returned from his observation very red in the face.

"I think it's a summer boarder," he reported. "I—I *think* so, that is."

"*Who——?*"

"I couldn't say," returned Mr. Abbey miserably. "Wait a minute, Miss Sarah! I—" But already, gray and silent as one of the ghosts she lived with, Miss Vaughan had glided from the room. "It's come!" groaned the Senator. "*She's* come! And before I had a chance to prepare Sarah's mind. And now if there ain't trouble, I'm the biggest liar in New England."

As Miss Vaughan opened the front door, there was revealed standing on the porch a stout woman who wore very pretty, fussy clothes, and the sort of smile that timid folks resent.

"I s'pose I oughtn't to have come so inform'ly," she began happily; "but it's only business that brings me this time. That is—" She swept a quick glance—a stare rather—up and down the other woman's shabby clothes. "You *are* Miss Vaughan, aren't you?"

"What was it you wanted, please?"

"Miss Vaughan." The visitor raised her metallic voice considerably. "May I see her? Oh—!" For the other had inclined her head an inch or two, her eyebrows raised, her lips a trifle pinched. "So *you* are she! How very interesting! I—we've all heard so much about you, Miss Vaughan," she laughed cheerfully.

"I believe I am what's called highly original," came the answer, absolutely without expression. "Before long I hope to rank as a real village character." A tiny pause, and then, to the listening Mr. Abbey's utter bewilderment, who in all the forty years of his acquaintance with her had never heard from her lips, "Wal naow, what's it yeou wanted to see me abaout?" she twanged.

"Delicious!" murmured the visitor. "I came on business, Miss Sarah."

"Bad mistake!" whispered the listener in the parlor. "Why *won't* they learn not to be so fresh—her first name!"

"How?"

"Furniture."

Miss Vaughan put her hand behind her ear, and apparently listened attentively.

"*Old* furniture!" shrilled the fat woman, pointing with her parasol into the hall by way of emphasis, where stood a deep-toned, magnificent high-boy, massive yet graceful, from its boldly carved claw-and-ball feet up to the whirl of gilded flame between its elegant scrolls. "Like that. My, but that's a stunning piece!"

"Furniture?" echoed Miss Sarah doubtfully, blindly.

"One of the men in the village told me that you might be willing to sell some. *Sell—!*" she repeated impatiently.

"Oh!" said Miss Sarah slowly. "Selling furniture, eh!"

"Here's my card," said the caller.

The white slip was read, then crumpled up in the thin hand.

"I'm glad to know your name, Mrs. Talbot. What was it you said about selling furniture? I wish," said Miss Vaughan ever so pleasantly, "that I could help you out, Mrs. Talbot."

A pause, during which hope blossomed on the caller's face like an expanding

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flower, though the gray woman in the doorway was considering her quite calmly—like a judge about to pass sentence. And then, like a bolt from the blue:

"Don't you find selling furniture a pretty hard business?" asked Miss Sarah compassionately.

"*Me?*"

"Seeing that fancy bag you're carryin', and seein' that circussy-lookin' team out yonder, I thought prob'ly you had *something* to peddle. But I never guessed at furniture. What you got—samples or jest pictures of it?"

The visitor's pomp fell from her like a disguise. "Do I *look* like a peddler?" she quavered hotly. "*Do* I?"

"When I first saw you" asserted Miss Sarah mildly, "I thought you might be a hair-tonic-and-cold-cream woman. But——"

"The *idea!*"

"You'll have to speak a leetle louder, Mrs. Turbot."

"This is outrageous!"

"How?"

"Insolence!"

"Sorry not to oblige ye no better, Mrs. Talker, but no furniture to-day, thank ye." And, as the dressy lady, actually muttering, steamed down the weedy brick path to where her carriage was waiting, "Can't I fetch you a glass of water?" drawled the conqueror. "You do look so het up!"

The door was shut.

"That woman!" whispered Miss Vaughan. Her eyes were closed. She leaned against the wall, first flushed, then gone clay white. "Oh, how could she! Oh, John Abbey, it's hard to be poor sometimes. The pain of it!" she whispered tragically. "It's never happened to me before."

"Guess she didn't mean no harm," Mr. Abbey tried to say. "She's the wife of Talbot the Cracker King. They've just built that big house across the river. Rich? Heavens!"

"They can't mean to be cruel," she assented faintly. "But," she cried clenching her hands at her side, "don't they think we have *any* feelings left, these rich people? They write stories about us; they laugh at us; they—patronize us, just because we're old and poor and different from *them!* Don't they think it all hurts? Well, it does. They talk about the New England conscience! Well, there's a New England pride, too, I'd like to have them know."

"What did she say she was after?" asked Mr. Abbey presently.

"Furniture! She asked me to sell her some of the old Vaughan furniture!"

"Well——?"

"As if it didn't mean everything to me!" she cried indignantly. "Everything! As if it was even mine to sell."

"But it is—if you want to, Miss Sarah."

"It is not mine to sell, John Abbey! It is a trust—a sacred trust, John Abbey. And I pray God I may keep it. I will keep it!" she cried quiveringly.

He waited a moment. "It would fetch a tremendous price, Miss Sarah."

"Very likely."

"That high-boy in the hall, now," he persisted. "Why, I saw one in New York, not near so fancy, they was askin' two hundred dollars for—and got it too. That chair you're sittin' in's worth fifty or sixty, just as it stands."

She rose to her feet. "John Abbey, look at me. Did you send that woman here—that Talbot thing?"

"Suppose I did?"

"Go away!" she commanded, low and clear. "I—I can't bear any more to-day."

"You won't sell anything?" he demanded, halting in his retreat. He spoke pleadingly—like a man who had made his last appeal. "Not a piece? Not—for food and drink and fire? It's come to that, Miss Sarah."

"When I want to sell a stick or an ounce or a shred of my things—the Vaughan things—I'll let you know. Till then——"

"Good-by," he said from the doorway. Then for a moment his strength flowed back to him. "I only did this—because we like to help all we can, Miss Sarah."

"I know it," she said quickly. "And I ought to thank you."

"What will happen when we've *done* all we can?" he asked bluntly.

"Haven't I always Theodore?" she demanded.

"Theodore? That——"

"My brother in New York," said Miss Vaughan splendidly, taking up his letter from the table. . . .

The twilight, melting into purple night, found her still sitting in her high-backed

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chair; and the sorrow in her face had deepened now to tragedy. As she lay back in the chair, she seemed to feel a tender reproach in the embrace of its arms, as in that of a friend she was about to betray.

"A debt of honor!" she whispered for the hundredth time, fingering her brother's letter. "He needs a hundred dollars for a debt of honor. There's only one thing to do. There's only one way to do it—only one." She covered her face with her hands. "Oh, God, if only I might have been spared *this*, dear God! They're all I have left—all, all, all! . . ."

A hundred miles to the west and south of quiet Kingsford, a man, in clothes cut overfashionably and patterned overbrightly, dodged a pair of ramping truck horses on his way across a muddy street crossing near a ferry, looked to the left at an advancing surface car, and stepped directly into the front wheel of a high-powered motor car slipping along close to the curb. He got up a trifle dazed. A crowd was pressing round him. His brown derby hat was dented and blackened with mud; mechanically he brushed it round and round. He knew that a policeman was holding him up under the arm. His hip hurt him some, and his left shoulder. The chauffeur's face was very white. He was quite silent, though some of the crowd called him names.

"How d'you feel now?" asked the policeman. "Guess he ain't hurt, Mr. Talbot."

A portly, middle-aged man leaned out of the automobile and asked another friendly, anxious question or two. The man who had been knocked down was very much interested in hearing that voice; it was different from what he supposed it would be; and the questioner's eyes were kindly, not cold and disdainful. In his half-daze, all he could think of clearly was the fact that the rich man was not very much like his photographs or the caricatures of him in the newspapers.

"Talbot!" muttered the man in the shabby clothes. "It's him! Joseph B. Talbot."

"Get in," said the rich man, throwing open the door of the tonneau. "I don't believe he's hurt, officer. But we'll look in at a hospital, if he wants to. Where are you bound, my friend?"

"To the races," said the shabby man before he thought, and the crowd laughed as it began to melt away. So did Mr. Talbot, and he patted the new passenger gayly on the knee.

"Then we'll go down together," he said affably. "How are you now—better?"

"Oh, yes. Thank you, Mr. Talbot. I knew you right away. It's white in you to take me with you," he laughed uneasily, his nerves still jangling. "I won't say again that I don't have *any* luck."

"H'm-m!" rumbled the financier. "Up against it?"

"Well, I *have* been worse."

There was a little roll of money in his fob pocket—a hundred dollars or so, and he had his watch, say forty dollars more. Also a letter which was comforting in its prospects—a letter with the Kingsford postmark, and written in a slim, slanting hand.

"A good deal worse," he amended.

"I'd like to be of some assistance to you, if I can—if you'll let me, Mr——"

"Vaughan," said the shabby man. "Thank you, sir. But——"

"Nonsense! Don't I owe you something for knocking you down?" he laughed. "Yes, by gad, a debt with interest."

"You're very kind to——"

"Nonsense, I say. Now look here. We'll begin right here with this debt paying, Mr. Vaughan—this way." He laid his hand on Vaughan's knee, searching his face with curious, inscrutable eyes. "Follow the races regularly?"

"No, sir. Er—that is——"

"Never mind that. Anyhow you might like to hear what I have heard about the third race this afternoon. Of course tips are all bosh—all but this one." And he laughed again, to the dutiful echo of the others. "Not that I *approve* of betting on a horse-race," added the great man stiffly; "but I hear very excellent accounts of a beast known as Old Maid. And——"

The shabby man almost stood up in the swiftly moving car. "What's that?" he gasped. "Old Maid?"

"She will be a fifty-to-one shot—I think they call it—at first," said Mr. Talbot. "But the odds will be far less before the race is called, no doubt."

"Old Maid!"

"Not to win the race Mr. Vaughan. I should bet on her—if I were a betting man by habit or profession, which I am not—for second or third place."

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"Old Maid!" the other repeated wonderingly, as he subsided to his seat again. There was magic in it—a coincidence like this!

"I was figuring to back that mare myself to-day," said Vaughan judicially. "There's something in the name, I guess. Thank you, sir."

"Not at all. Come and see me after the race is run. I want to talk to you for a minute. Shoulder paining you any now?" he asked, very kindly and friendly, not a bit like his pictures.

"Thank you, sir," said Vaughan again. Extraordinary how one's fancies work out successfully sometimes! Old Maid every time that day from the moment the postman rang at his bell in the morning till now!

"My dear Brother," so the letter from Kingsford ran, "My only wish is to be of such help as I can whenever anything like trouble comes near you. I have been a little short of ready money myself, but presently I shall have some income due, and then I will send you the hundred dollars with the earnest hope that it will be of use to you in meeting your debt of honor. I would like to believe for a special reason that this money was bringing something like real and permanent happiness to my dear brother, who must come and see me when he can."

A good sister, that old maid up in Kingsford whom he had not seen for nearly five years! Old Maid, a good name to bet on that afternoon! A man in Talbot's position was apt to know things that other men have to pay to hear of, or can only guess at. And mentally the shabby man counted up his money now—and *then*.

"What will you do with it, if you win?" Mr. Talbot's friend was asking the great man, and Vaughan listened curiously. What *did* rich men do with their money?

"Make a present to my wife," the Cracker King replied. "She's on the track of some wonderful old furniture she's discovered up in the country—where our new place is. Something pretty good, I guess, from what she writes. I can send her enough for a couple of chairs, maybe, if Old Maid does what we expect of her. . . ."

Through a long and terrible hour Miss Sarah stood by and watched while the fat woman of the former interview—restless, voluble, and oh, so rich!—handled and priced the gods of the house of Vaughan. And never for an instant did the latter guess at the pain that gnawed the heart of the gaunt old woman, whose ideas of values were so absurd it was a sin to take advantage of her.

"I'd like to buy the whole house out," declared Mrs. Talbot with a sigh of happiness, after pricing the bed in which Lafayette had slept—a magnificent four poster, and the dining-room chairs. "I don't suppose you'd want to part with all your old things, though—even on very generous terms, would you?"

"No," said Miss Sarah quietly. "Not all."

"But the secretary!" They had come back into the sitting-room by now. "You must let me have *that*. It's awfully quaint."

"Do you want it—specially?"

"If you could only see how bare my little library looks, you'd have pity on me. Come! I'm bound to have it, you know," she laughed gayly, laying her plump hand on Miss Vaughan's arm. "Do!"

"I should want a hundred dollars for it, Mrs. Talbot."

"What—? Well, of course, one can't get these old things for nothing any longer. A hundred, you said?" She looked it over once more. "Very well. It's mine, Miss Sarah." What was it that made her hesitate for just a second? "Are you sure you want to let me have it? Because——"

"Take it," was the answer. "You may as well."

The afternoon ended in sullen rain; a wind roared in the giant horse-chestnut trees before the Vaughan house with a noise like surf. She could not eat her trifle of food. Since her visitor had departed, she had sat almost motionless at the old secretary. Presently she lit her lamp, and began to clear out the old drawers and the crammed pigeon-holes. The files of receipts dated back to the days of her grandfather—this or that horse bought or sold, Morgan Pride, Silver Bells, famous trotters of the old days which he had loved like his own sons; bills for books—when Professor Longfellow was writing; tucked in among them a browned, cracking sheet of letter paper marked "Personal and Confidential." She glanced it down with a sense of wrong-doing. The writer was explaining

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something he had said in a public speech—so patiently!—as to a man whose criticism was well worth answering. The modest signature leaped up off the page. "Lincoln!" whispered Miss Sarah reverently, proudly. "To my father!" More letters followed—to her mother from her soldier sons. She pressed the secret spring, and drew out the little box concealed under the middle compartment. Another package, tied with blue ribbon. She took it out; but these letters she knew by heart—all His plans for their happiness together after their marriage, His assurances that he was perfectly well, that there was no danger of the yellow fever spreading to where He was living. . . . The old secretary! It was here that she had written her answers to her lover's letters. And to-morrow they would come to take it away.

"It is cruel!" she sobbed, quite spent at last. "Cruel and hard—hard! But Theodore says it is a debt of honor—and the Vaughans have always paid honorably, thank God."

The shriek of the whistle on the last up-train blowing for Kingsford roused her from a sorrow that numbed her tired hands and heart. She finished her task, too exhausted for tears. The pigeon-holes and drawers were empty; their precious contents had been carefully stowed here and there; nothing remained to do but to put out the light, when suddenly there came to her the sound of a horse splashing up the muddy road, then the surly "Whoa!" of the driver, who had apparently pulled up at her gate.

"They can't be coming for the old desk to-night!" she gasped. "Oh, please, not to-night!"

The knocker crashed on the front door. The carriage drove away—she could hear the grate of the wheels as the driver cramped to make the turn. She heard a cheery bar or two of whistling on her front porch, then another knock, and then——

"Oh, Sarah Jane!" somebody called out, with a laugh of real happiness.

"Who is it?" she whispered to herself, over and over, on her way to the door a step at a time, her eyes wide with fatigue and fright.

"Got some fatted calf ready?" asked a man's voice, as she unbolted the door and swung it open.

What Senator Abbey met with the next morning when he went to the old house after the secretary, with Mrs. Talbot's hundred dollars for Miss Sarah in his pocket and a hundred confused apologies on his lips for his share in the deal, supplied him with gossip for nearly a year. From the open window of Miss Sarah's sitting-room drifted the fragrance of a cigar! From upstairs came the voice of Miss Sarah singing "Coronation."

"Just the man I wanted to see!" she exclaimed briskly, as the Senator commenced his apology for being alive. "Come right in."

"I'm awful sorry, but I came after the secretary, Miss Sarah."

"Ha!"

"Mrs. Talbot asked me to."

"Is she waiting for it now?"

"She said she'd have the room ready so's it could go right into place."

"Well," said Miss Vaughan deliberately, "you tell Mrs. Talbot, John Abbey, that—what's the expression young people use nowadays?"

"What, Miss Sarah?"

She folded her arms tightly. "Nothing doing!" remarked Miss Sarah serenely.

"But——"

"Not"—and she smiled beautifully—"not on your tintype, Senator. Nor on hers, for that matter."

He fell back, staring at her blankly. What had come to her? Where had she learned those queer bits of slang? Who—?

"Say," said Mr. Abbey uneasily. "Look here, Miss Sarah——"

"*Look* here, if you like. And tell me," she commanded, dragging him indoors, "exactly what you see. First—*this!*"

A man who was prowling about in her sitting-room turned to them with a smile. But of him the Senator was only dimly conscious, for, opening a drawer, Miss Vaughan drew out a stout blue envelope, and, without a word, she spread out before the Senator's astonished eyes a package of yellow-backed bank-notes.

"Fifty of them," was her only comment.

"What——?"

"And for a hundred dollars apiece. That's one thing for you to see. And the other——"

The strange man came up to them, laughing contentedly. Mr. Abbey gave a

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startled glance from him to the photograph on the mantel-piece.

"Theodore!" he cried.

"My brother!" said Miss Sarah, slipping her arm through the stranger's.

"Glad to meet you, Mr.——"

"*Senator* Abbey," she corrected, drawing him up to her and presenting him with the gentlest pressure of her hand on his arm. "The best—and most devoted—of my Kingsford friends, brother dear."

"It ain't much *I've* been able to do for her. But," said the Senator, backing away, "we liked to do what we could, you know. The—the Vaughans, you know."

"Come back when you can," said Miss Sarah. "I want you to hear all about it."

"Just like a novel, isn't it!" Theodore remarked, watching Miss Sarah put up the money, with lazy satisfaction.

"Like the old-fashioned ones, my dear. Yes, a happy ending, Theodore." She looked up at him over her shoulder. "You haven't told *me* the story yet—all of it. You made a successful business venture, I gathered from what you said last night."

"A speculation, it was."

"Ah—?" She darted one of her quick, half-humorous looks at him. "I know so little about business matters—even my own brother's."

He did not seem to hear her. He was looking out the window at the quiet country-side, brilliant under the sun of a morning after rain. "My—speculation turned out all right this time," he said slowly, with a doubtful shake of his head. "But——"

"Well——?"

"I'm going to quit it, Sarah."

"Your business?"

"For *good!*" he exclaimed, driving his fist into his other hand. "Even after this. Even after the business has earned some money that's going to do somebody some good."

She looked him through and through. "Would I prefer having you in some other business, Theodore?"

"Yes," he replied almost defiantly. "You don't want me to be a——"

"S-sh!" she cautioned, a smile puckering her lips. "Isn't it in the Vaughan blood?"

"What is——?"

"Didn't you ever hear of Morgan's Pride and Silver Bells?" she countered, almost in a whisper.

"*What——?*"

"Your grandfather was famous for his trotting horses," she sighed demurely. "I believe the sport was very popular in New England at one time."

The man held out his hands to her. "You dear old thing, you'd find some good in Satan himself, if only his name was Vaughan."

"Very likely," she admitted candidly, and then, with a smile that was full both of love and of mockery, "Come and kiss me, Theodore," said Miss Sarah.

"How did you know it?" he asked a moment later.

"One finds nearly everything in the New York papers nowadays," she replied carelessly. "Even the names of one's friends. If you know where to look."

At their noonday meal she remembered to ask him two final questions.

"What business are you going into, Theodore, now that——"

"Crackers. And I'm going to make good, sister."

"Crackers?" she echoed uncertainly. "Do you think that crackers are quite——"

"Quite!" he laughed—but seriously. "What's good enough for *him* is good enough for anybody, I guess. He's a mighty kind, square man, sister. He said that as he'd nearly killed me with his automobile, he owed me at least the *chance* of another life. So he took my name and address, and we had a talk. And—he gave me a good job in his office, Sarah," he concluded. There were something like tears in his brown eyes.

She did not notice them. "Who is *he?*" she asked impatiently.

"One of the best men that the Lord ever made, that's who. And if I ever make what I hope to make of myself yet, Sarah—as good a Vaughan as any of them—though, Lord, what time I have wasted!—it'll be owing to him and nobody else. Just him!"

"Him?"

"Joseph B. Talbot, the Cracker King. God bless him!" said Theodore fervently.

"Ha!" ejaculated Miss Sarah. "Very well," she agreed after a pause. "All right. A-*men*. God bless his wife, too, if you like. Let me pour you a fresh cup of tea."

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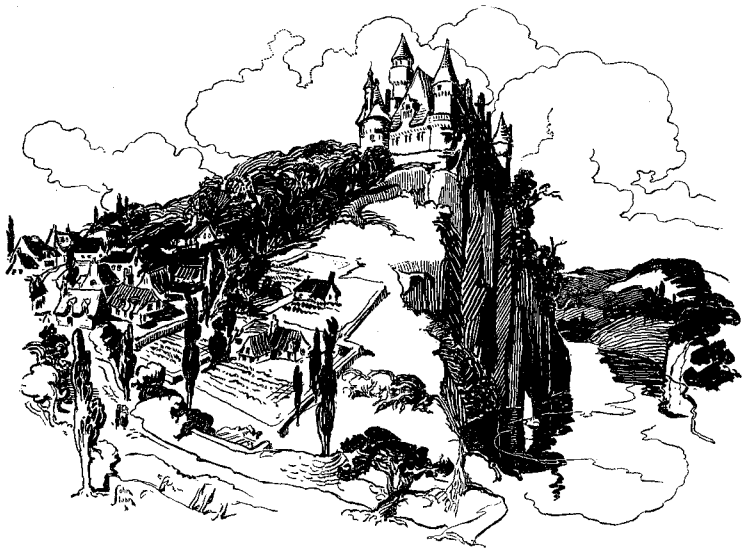

THE CONFESSION OF THE COUNTESS ANNE

By Arthur Sherburne Hardy

AN object dropped from certain windows of the Château de Freyr fell into the Meuse, and from that side, indeed, but for these windows its gray walls were hardly to be distinguished from the cliff which they prolonged. To the south, where the river escaped from the shadow of the cliff into the sunlight of the meadows, the approaches were less abrupt, the lower slopes being covered with vineyards. Still further around, to the west, a noble wood of chestnut and oak rose in steps to the great wall of the terrace, their topmost branches almost reaching to the terrace level. Even on this side, however, the pathway, which first skirted the vineyards and then disappeared in the wood, was so steep that when the Countess Anne returned from an excursion to the town a donkey was always in waiting for her at the Sign of the White Fawn, where the path left the main road. There is a legend that when the King of France passed a night in the château on his way to Flanders, four stout Flemish draught horses had dragged His Majesty's coach up the hill into the courtyard whose stones had never before, as certainly they never have since, felt the wheel of a carriage. But this legend is of doubtful authenticity, and was repeated to the few travellers who stopped for a glass of wine at the Sign of the White Fawn only as one repeats similar doubtful tales of what happened in the days when there were giants in the land —with a "they say" and a shrug of the shoulders.

"Evidently," said the Countess Anne one day to Doctor Leroux as they climbed the path to the château, "evidently my ancestors were in the habit of paying visits which they did not wish returned."

The cluster of houses at the foot of the château was also known as Freyr. A few of its narrower streets straggled a little way up the hill, but the greater number, including the great square with its fountain by Girardon, stretched out into the meadows along the river, bordered by a wide allée of plane trees, in whose shade gossips knitted, and children played, when the weather was fine.

These gossips would have told you that it was now thirty-five years or more since the Countess Anne came to Freyr, an event of great importance at the time, inasmuch as the château had not been inhabited for more than a century. An event, too, which gave rise to much speculation, for in those days, of course, the Countess was young, barely twenty, and according to

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rumor, marvellously beautiful. According to rumor, too, she had lived in a brilliant world with which Freyr and its lonely château had nothing in common. Would she bring gallants and ladies in her train? Would the *cor de chasse* sound once more in the park, and candle lights dance again in the mirrors of the *salle de bal?* Then, little by little, other rumors, from God knows where, filtered through the town—that there was a Count who had eaten the Countess' dowry in less than a year, some said in less time even; that the young wife had fled from her husband as from the plague, or, according to others, had been deserted as soon as the dowry was gone. Possibly the Abbé D'Arlot or Doctor Leroux could tell you whether the Count was still alive. But as he had never been seen by any of the inhabitants of Freyr, and as there were no children to remind one that he had ever existed, he was gradually forgotten even by the gossips who knitted in the allée by the Meuse. Even his name had perished from the land, for every one in Freyr had come to say "the Countess Anne."

"I think," said the Countess one day to Doctor Leroux as he walked beside her donkey up the path, "that I must purchase another donkey. Balafré is beginning to stumble, and when he stumbles badly he gives me such a shock that I have a pain in my heart."

"That is not the fault of Balafré," said Doctor Leroux.

"No, so you have told me before. It is the fault of my heart."

"Undoubtedly. What could I say to my conscience if I did not warn you against those exertions which . . . for example, I saw you to-day lift that big baby of Mère Bigot."

"The dear child! so I did," said the Countess; and then, after a little silence, "so you think it will stop some day, without warning?"

"It is possible, certainly."

"Provided I have time for confession and the sacraments," said the Countess as if to herself, "I should not object so much to that way."

"You know I do not attach any"—he emphasized the word gently—"importance to the sacraments. As for confession, that is another matter. A good confession has often been of great assistance to me. But for *you*," he said, laying his hand on Balafré's back, for the path was steep at this point, "what can you possibly . . . ah, well," for the gesture of the Countess arrested him, "if that is so, why not make your confession now?"

"There are confessions one does not make till one is sure one is about to die," replied the Countess Anne.

Doctor Leroux walked on beside Balafré in silence. There was sometimes such a mingling of seriousness and playfulness in the Countess' answers that silence was the best refuge for uncertainty. Often, however, as now, the Doctor's silence was the silence of irritation. It irritated him to think that she, whom he held to be no whit lower than the angels, should be tormented by the need of confession. For what could such a woman possibly have to confess! And his irritation found vent when, on his way home, he encountered the Abbé D'Arlot, who always dined at the château on Thursdays, slowly ascending the path.

"Why do you seek to govern by fear!" he

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exclaimed, shaking his cane. "That the law should inspire fear, that is natural; but for Religion, it is folly. The criminal does not commit murder for fear of the gallows. That is well—for the victim! that is well for Society, which protects itself. But what good does this fear accomplish for the criminal himself? Absolutely none. It stays his hand, it does not change his heart. Is it to wash the hand or to cleanse the heart that the Church exists? Ah, that the Law should govern by fear, that I admit. But the Church! when the Church inspires fear it is because it wishes to usurp the place of Law, to govern as well as to pardon." And turning on his heel, the Doctor went grumbling down the path.

Accustomed to these outbursts, the Abbé smiled. None knew better than he that his friend possessed the kindest of hearts. But it took fire easily. As Père Bigot said: "*c'est comme les allumettes—faut pas les gratter!*" for Père Bigot had often experienced the Doctor's wrath, being accustomed to descant to the habitués of the White Fawn on the Art of Government, a proceeding which excited the Doctor's bitter scorn. "There is one branch of knowledge," he said one day to the Mayor, "which it is not necessary to teach in the schools."

"What is that?" inquired the Mayor unsuspectingly.

"How to govern one's neighbor."

Yet Père Bigot was never tired of telling how, when he broke his leg drawing logs from the forest, Monsieur le Docteur had cared for him "as if he had been the Countess Anne."

The truth is that while tolerant of every form of weakness and suffering, the Doctor despised every form of pretension. With politics he would have nothing to do, and on all social questions was as conservative as on religious ones he was radical. His speech was often hot and his silence chilling, and with many ideas of the day which, like other ephemeral fashions, penetrated even to Freyr, he was sadly out of joint. "But," said Madame Leroux, "he has the heart of a little lamb"—and Madame Leroux, while adoring her husband, understood him well.

As for the baby of Mère Bigot it was true, as the Doctor had pointed out, that it was enormously heavy for a baby of its age. But then, it had such an enticing way of stretching out its hands that it was impossible to resist their appeal. Not that it enjoyed any special prerogatives. To the Countess Anne all babies were appealing. No mother in Freyr had any cause for jealousy in this respect. "Ah, what a pity she is not a mother," they used to say.

But this had not always been so. Time was when the peasant on the straight white road which divided the meadows, doffing his hat as she went by, slender and erect on her black gelding, received but scant acknowledgment. Tradesmen who had counted on better times with her coming were sorely disappointed in those days, for there were neither revels nor feasting to quicken trade, nor any change in the usual

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life of Freyr. A few lights shone at night in the château windows, and now and then a solitary figure walked in the château wood—that was all.

How or why the transformation came to pass, no one in Freyr could have told you. You know how marvellously the dead leaves of the dead year disappear, how little by little the naked branches take on those faint colors which herald the spring; and then, after days of alternate sun and cold, and delays without number, how, in spite of all these warnings, we are suddenly astonished to find every bud and leaf in its place, and to hear the strife of chattering birds seeking nests. No less wonderful was the miracle wrought in the Countess Anne. When first she came to Freyr the signs of a winter lately passed were in her face, as if something had frozen the sources of life as winter freezes the wood springs; and in her manner a hauteur and aloofness such as one feels when one attempts to penetrate in winter the snow-bound wood. And now the littlest child sitting on the door-step in the sun stretched out its tiny hands confidently as she passed by, and Madame Leroux, watching her retreating form as she went out the gateway of the Hôtel Dieu, turned to her husband saying:

"It is not the same woman that came to Freyr years ago."

"The very same," he replied. "Go get that stone, my dear, which you keep in the depths of your chest, and see how it will shine when it sees the light of the sun."

Madame Leroux knew very well that he was chiding her for so rarely wearing the one jewel she possessed—a souvenir of such happy days that she locked it securely in her chest lest it should be lost—and smiled. Then she began to think, to wonder what sun had shone upon the heart of the Countess Anne.

She remembered the day her husband had first gone to the château, and how, when he had returned and had talked for a whole hour on every subject but the one which was consuming her heart, unable to refrain any longer she had asked at last if the Countess was really as beautiful as rumor had said. They were at table, and she remembered well how her husband, looking up from his plate, replied:

"My dear, what do you say of this ragout?"

"Of this ragout?" she had stammered, taken aback, "why, it is delicious."

"So? and what do you say of a morning of May, one of those mornings, for example, when the buds are turning silver and rose, when the leaves are preparing to unfold and birds are calling in the wood?"

"That it is beautiful, certainly."

"O words, words! why not delicious—not like this ragout," he added maliciously, smiling over the rim of his spectacles, "but like the Countess Anne."

She remembered that day was the first day of spring, for the windows were open and the bees came in and out seeking what was not yet to be found in the fields, and that her husband, finishing his coffee by the garden window, had added:

"Something, perhaps, not yet beautiful, but which promises to be so, which charms because it suggests, which stirs the imagination and calls out to the things in the heart which are dying, saying 'do not die, do not die.'"

Ah, Madame Leroux had thought, she must be beautiful indeed.

Above all she remembered her disappointment when in her turn she also first saw the Countess Anne—a black figure, its face as white as its white hands, taking scarcely more notice of her courtesy than did the hound by its side. And now the Countess was an old woman, with white hair and a figure no longer slim, but with eternal spring in her eyes. Yes, it

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was true, as her husband had said—some one, something, had taken the jewel out of the dark into the sun. And Madame Leroux, who endeavored to atone for her husband's delinquencies, crossed herself, saying, "God only was capable of such a miracle."

Of the two men most people would have selected the Abbé rather than the Doctor for the friendship of the Countess Anne. For the Abbé, though poor, was of noble family, having in his face and manners those signs of race which circumstances can never wholly efface or disguise, and which often contrasted strongly with the brusque, even bourgeois ways of the Doctor. Yet whereas the Abbé dined at the château only once a week, Doctor Leroux was a frequent visitor. This did not trouble the peace of Madame Leroux. She knew that she was his wife, the mother of his children, the woman who in certain respects was his inferior, but whom he tenderly loved. She knew, also, that the other was the woman who in certain other respects was his superior, who, in the dull monotony of Freyr, was the stimulus to his intellectual nature as she, Madame Leroux, was its rest.

Notwithstanding their different natures and beliefs, there were no better friends in Freyr than the Abbé and the Doctor. Often in the dusk of the allée under the limes they were to be seen walking leisurely to and fro of summer evenings, the Abbé, his hands crossed behind his back, listening, defending, explaining, the Doctor always attacking something, pounding the gravel with his cane. On one subject above all others the Doctor loved to talk—the Countess Anne—and it was strange that the Abbé, who certainly shared his friend's opinion on this subject if on no other, was so reticent whenever her name was spoken. For example, the Doctor would say:

"What is adorable is that she gives without ostentation, without playing that odious part of the Lady Bountiful who cannot forget the gulf over which she steps."

"Do you think she is even aware of it?" The Abbé would reply gently.

"But no discretion," the Doctor would pursue, waving his stick aloft, "no discretion. Only yesterday I said to her, 'Please, please discriminate a little. That piece of a hundred sous which you gave to that old rascal Gervais will certainly find its way into the till of the White Fawn.'"

And then the Abbé would remain silent, or perhaps, on the way home, just before parting, would say in an impersonal way:

"Charity does not discriminate. Organ-

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ize charity, ask of it judgment, reason, and it is no longer charity. Such only creates what it seeks to relieve. There is only one charity, the charity that reaches the heart because it proceeds from the heart, and that charity never hesitates, never reasons—it gives, at the first touch of the hand on the hem of the garment. The mistakes it makes are only the price it pays for the immense privilege of doing good."

It was a day of early autumn—the grapes still hung between the yellowing leaves of the vines—when Doctor Leroux, his black felt hat pulled down to his shaggy eyebrows, came through the gate of the château path, past the creaking sign of the White Fawn and along the narrow street which led to his own door. If there had been nothing else to mark that day Madame Leroux would have remembered it as one on which her husband had no greeting for her when she looked up at the sound of the opening door. For without even taking off his coat or hat, he disappeared into the laboratory, a small yellow phial in his hand.

She was just reaching to the nail where hung the little green bag of woven grass she always carried when she went to town—for the maid had forgotten the black beans for the master's soup—when something stayed her hand. She was not alarmed, but, as she afterward said, she "felt something." So laying aside her black shawl and taking her knitting from her pocket, she sat down by the window. And then, while waiting, recollecting that her husband had been called to the château, she began to feel fear, that fear which is just fear, and which, because it is fear of one knows not what, is the worst fear of all. How long she sat there, listening for her husband's step, she did not know, though the clock ticked in full sight above the chimney mantel. At last the door opened and her husband came in, sitting down beside her heavily, with a great sigh, like a man whose strength is spent. She laid her hand over his as it rested on the arm of his chair, looking into his face but not venturing to speak.

"I give her three days—perhaps not even that," he groaned.

She stood up at his first words, leaning, dazed, against the wall.

"What will Freyr do without the Countess Anne," she gasped with a little choking sob.

Of all the tributes the Countess Anne had ever received, this first thought of Madame Leroux, selfish as it might seem, was perhaps the greatest and best.

"And to think that I foresaw nothing," he moaned pitifully; "that while I stood at the door death should come in the window—that I can do nothing—that I am helpless!"

The needles trembled in Madame Leroux's hand.

"There is God, my dear," she murmured.

"Please do not speak to me of God," he said with a gesture of weariness. Then silence fell upon them both.

There was a little path in the garden, covered with a trellis from which grapes hung in yellow and purple clusters. Here, up and down, for a long hour the Doctor walked that day, struggling with thoughts which had never troubled him before.

Should he tell the Countess Anne?

Surely it was his duty always to prolong life to the last possible moment, to fight Death with every ally at his command, even when the battle was lost. And no ally was stronger than Hope. To say "Courage! we two will conquer," that was what he had always said to every patient. By what right could he say, "It is useless, dismiss the physician and send for the priest"? To soften pain was one thing, to shorten life another. Was it less criminal to shorten it by taking away hope than by administering an opiate? Besides, what could she have to confess, such a woman, whose life had been open to his

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eye for nearly forty years? Nothing. It was monstrous, absurd. Why should he attach so much importance to a chance word? Yet what if it were true, that something lay on that white heart? By what right should he deprive it of its desire? For the end was sure, the fight was hopeless. Why then should he say there is hope, when hope there was none? What if, after all, there was God waiting, ready to listen, a God of Judgment, a God of Wrath as well as of Mercy, who would say, "Inasmuch as ye did not cast your burden upon Me, depart from Me into everlasting darkness." That, too, was monstrous, absurd. That such a God should one day hold him responsible for the peace of a soul troubled him less than that that soul should one day look at him with reproachful eyes. For the first time in his life he almost wished for such a God, some final Judge to whom he could turn in his doubt, upon whom he could cast the burden of his perplexity.

A wooden gate opened from the garden. He lifted the latch mechanically, following the winding street, heedless of greetings, and turned up the path by the Sign of the White Fawn.

"How good of you to come! I believe there must be some truth in these new-fangled notions of telepathy. I was really about to send for you."

He pressed the white hand in his for reply, his throat too rebellious for speech. Then, abruptly, without further waiting, a little timidly, almost as it were like a novice speaking of things in which she was not proficient:

"Do you know, my friend, I think I am about to die."

He started, involuntarily, experiencing an immense relief that his task was made so easy. She looked into his face searchingly. He did not exclaim, "Nonsense!" brusquely, as perhaps she expected.

"Do you believe then in presentiments?" she asked, her voice trembling, but very sweet and clear.

"They are sometimes not to be disregarded," he said hoarsely.

Her eyes did not fall, and she understood.

"Thank you," she replied steadily. And then, after a pause, "you are always the good friend."

He walked away to hide his face and was standing at the window when she spoke again.

"Please come and sit here, beside me, I am not afraid."

The strength in her voice astonished and steadied him. Not afraid! For a moment the world became fairer and brighter. What a fool he had been! Then the reality came back, and as he took the seat beside her again he covered his eyes with his hand. She took the free hand and drew him down, smiling.

"You came to comfort me, and now—now it is I who have to comfort you." He straightened up, smiling too, something like his old self, and laid his other hand over hers. Her eyes wandered a while over the room and then came back to his.

"Tell me, will there be pain? You know what a coward I am."

Ah, what scenes, what suffering he had witnessed, dry-eyed. Now the tears rolled down his cheeks.

He shook his head.

"Precious tears, I love them, every one," thought the Countess Anne. "Just drowsiness, such as I felt before you came?" He nodded. "Sometimes God is good," she murmured, closing her eyes. Then she roused herself and taking a key from under her pillow put it in his hand. "We have had much business together," she said earnestly. "*That* must not stop. You will find in my desk everything I wish done. You will do it—just the same—just the same as if—hush!—better perhaps. And now, my friend, you must go, for a while—but not far."

"Never far," he whispered. The big tears fell on the white sheet as he bent over her.

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She kept his hand a moment, then released it reluctantly and turned her face to the wall, repeating under her breath, "Not far—not far."

As he moved softly toward the door she called to him.

"Will you send, please, for the Abbé D'Arlot?"

He nodded silently.

"Remember, I am not afraid," she smiled.

Then he left the room.

Although it was only mid-afternoon when Doctor Leroux knocked at the Abbé's door, the day being Thursday, the Abbé already wore his best soutane—for Thursday was the day on which he dined at the château. Few and blunt words suffice for men. When, therefore, in his usual courtly manner the Abbé had offered him a chair, the Doctor began at once, without preamble. After his visit at the château it was a relief to speak freely again.

"The Countess Anne is dying."

The Abbé's face became pale as death.

"Dying!" he exclaimed with a quick indrawn breath, brushing with a gesture of bewilderment the thin hair from his forehead with his thin white hand.

"She has sent for you—you had better go at once—she wishes to make confession." The words came with an effort.

"She wishes me? But I am not her confessor," gasped the Abbé, sinking into his chair.

His breast rose and fell so violently under his robe that Doctor Leroux strode to the sideboard. "Have you no brandy? Here, take this." He filled a glass from the decanter of wine and carried it to the Abbe's lips.

"It is nothing. I will go," he said, refusing the proffered glass. "Dying! *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" he moaned.

"You are not her confessor?" said Doctor Leroux. "I thought—I always supposed—at all events," he faltered, "she desires you." He put on his hat and went to the door. "I am going to her also. This is a time when she needs us both."

As the door closed he heard the sound of sobbing within.

Through the wicker gate, between the high vineyard walls, and then into the cool spaces of the wood the Abbé climbed the château path. The loiterers at the tables under the trellis of the White Fawn rose and touched their hats at his approach. But he took no heed of them.

"The Abbé is growing old," said one.

Half-way through the wood he paused to rest on a wooden bench, just where an opening in the trees disclosed the meadows and the curve of the winding Meuse. Every Thursday for twenty years he had climbed this path. Every Thursday evening for twenty years he had sat in the same chair at the same table in the great dining-room of the château. In summer, after dinner, they sat on the terrace, and in winter in the two high damask-covered chairs before the fire. And every Thursday evening for twenty years there had been three games of

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draughts before he took his leave. Now that was all over, forever.

Dying? He had not even observed that she was growing old.

In the courtyard the great Dane welcomed him as always. There was no commotion. Nothing was changed. For a moment he said to himself, "I dream." Then he rang the bell at the small side door.

Doctor Leroux was in the ante-room. "You have no time to lose," he said. No, not yet," he replied to the Abbé's eyes, "but unconsciousness—that may come soon."

The Abbé had become quite calm now. His pale, refined face had become still and his step firm.

When the door closed behind him he lifted his eyes. It was not the face of the dying that they saw, but a face transfigured, radiant, the face of one whose waiting was at an end. He went forward fascinated, bewildered, by that radiance, like a man who does not know what is to come.

"Sit down—here," she said, indicating the chair by her bed. He took the chair. "Nearer," said the Countess Anne. He felt that he was beginning to tremble, that self-control was slipping away. "Nearer," she repeated.

He bent his white head till it rested on the sheet close to her arm.

"Look up—" her voice was almost a whisper—"did you think you could love me for twenty years and give no sign?" she smiled.

A strange groan escaped his lips, and his head fell upon the pillow beside hers.

"Do you hear?" she whispered. "I love you—I—love—you."

"And you are dying—dying," he cried aloud.

"That makes no difference," said the Countess Anne.

If any one would know what was passing in the Abbé's heart, let him go to the marshes when the tide is full. He had forgotten his calling, the long weary years. God and the world were swept away. Strength had forsaken him. He lay like a little child, weak, powerless, before that tide that came so resistlessly, filling every empty chamber, stilling every ache, satisfying every thirsty root, till the heart, like the marsh, was full—and then, suddenly, mercifully, came night.

Doctor Leroux had hastened in at the first faint cry. They bore him away gently, but every effort was unavailing. He had climbed the château path for the last time.

"At last," thought Doctor Leroux, bitterly, "peace with God is made—and it has cost a life."

When he reëntered the room the Countess' eyes were still shining. They looked up to his in mute appeal, and before he knew what words he was uttering, under their insistent spell he had spoken:

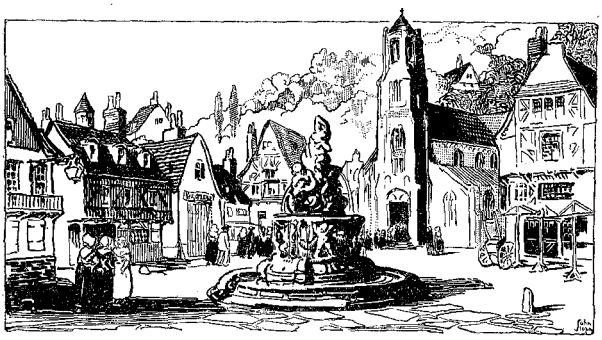
"Grief killed him."

The lips quivered, but the strange, triumphant smile remained. A feeble hand plucked at his sleeve and drew his head down till his ear touched her lips.

"It was not grief—it was joy," she whispered.

The next day there was a great stillness in Freyr. Every shop was closed. For the bells of Our Lady of Mercy were tolling in the great square.

Doctor Leroux walked rarely now in the allée by the Meuse. When his work was done he loved rather to sit with Madame Leroux under the garden trellis or before the fire, his hand in hers. But she never knew what sun had shone upon the heart of the Countess Anne.



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AT THE FOOT OF HEMLOCK MOUNTAIN

By Dorothy Canfield

"In connection with this phase of the problem of transportation it must be remembered that the rush of population to the great cities is no temporary movement. It is caused by a final revolt against that malignant relic of the dark ages, the country village, and by a healthy craving for the deep, full life of the metropolis, for contact with the vitalizing stream of humanity."—PRITCHELL'S "Handbook of Economics," page 247.

SOMETIMES people from Hillsboro' leave our forgotten valley, high among the Green Mountains, and "go down to the city," as the phrase runs. They always come back exclaiming that they should think New Yorkers would just die of lonesomeness, and crying out in an ecstasy of relief that it does seem so good to get back where there are some folks. After the desolate isolation of city streets, empty of humanity, filled only with hurrying ghosts, the vestibule of our church on prayer-meeting night fills one with an exalted realization of the great numbers of the human race. It is like coming into a warmed and lighted room, full of friendly faces, after wandering long by night in a forest peopled only with flitting shadows. In the phantasmagoric pantomime of the city, we forget that there are so many real people in all the world, so diverse, so unfathomably human as those who meet us in the little post-office on the night of our return to Hillsboro'.

Like any other of those gifts of life which gratify insatiable cravings of humanity, living in a country village conveys a satisfaction which is incommunicable. A great many authors have written about it, just as a great many authors have written about the satisfaction of being in love, but in the one as in the other case, the essence of the thing escapes. People rejoice in sweethearts because all humanity craves love, and they thrive in country villages because they crave human life. Now the living spirit of neither of these things can be caught in a net of words. All the foolish, fond doings of lovers may be set down on paper by whatever eavesdropper cares to take the trouble, but no one can realize from that record anything of the glory in the hearts of the unconscious two. All the queer grammar and insignificant surface eccentricities of village character may be ruthlessly reproduced in every variety of dialect, but no one can guess from that record the abounding flood of richly human life which pours along the village street.

This tormenting inequality between the thing felt and the impression conveyed had vexed us unceasingly until one day Simple Martin, the town fool, who always says our wise things, said one of his wisest. He was lounging by the watering-trough one sunny day in June, when a carriage-load of "summer folk" from Granville over the mountain stopped to water their horses. They asked him as they always, always ask all of us, "For mercy's sake, what do you people *do* all the time, away off here, so far from everything?"

Simple Martin was not irritated, or perplexed, or rendered helplessly inarticulate by this question, as the rest of us had always been. He looked around him at the lovely, sloping lines of Hemlock Mountain, at the Necronsett River singing in the sunlight, at the familiar, friendly faces of the people in the street, and he answered in astonishment at the ignorance of his questioners, "*Do?* Why, we jes' *live!*"

We felt that he had explained us once and for all. We had known that, of course, but we hadn't before, in our own phrase, "sensed it." We just live. And sometimes it seems to us that we are the only people in America engaged in that most wonderful occupation. We know, of course, that we must be wrong in thinking this, and that there must be countless other Hillsboro's scattered everywhere, rejoicing as we do in an existence which does not necessarily make us care-free or happy, which does not in the least absolve us from the necessity of working hard (for Hillsboro' is unbelievably poor in money), but which does keep us alive in every fibre of our sympathy and thrilling with the consciousness of the life of others.

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A common and picturesque expression for a common experience runs, "It's so noisy I can't hear myself think." After a visit to New York we feel that its inhabitants are so deafened by the constant blare of noisy confusion that they can't feel themselves live. The steady sufferers from this complaint do not realize their condition. They find it on the whole less trouble *not* to feel themselves live, and they are most uneasy when chance forces them to spend a few days (on shipboard, for instance) where they are not protected by ceaseless and aimless activity from the consciousness that they are themselves. They cannot even conceive the bittersweet, vital taste of that consciousness as we villagers have it, and they cannot understand how arid their existence seems to us without this unhurried, penetrating realization of their own existence and of the meaning of their acts. We do not blame city dwellers for not having it, we lose it when we venture into their maelstrom. Like them, we become dwarfed by overwhelming numbers, and shrivelled by the incapacity to "sense" the humanity of the countless human simulacra about us. But we do not stay where we cannot feel ourselves live! We hurry back to the shadow of Hemlock Mountain, feeling that to love life one does not need to be what is usually called happy, one needs only to live.

It cannot be, of course, that we are the only community to discover this patent fact; but we know no more of the others than they of us. All that we hear from that part of America which is not Hillsboro' is the wild yell of excitement going up from the great cities, where people seem to be doing everything that was ever done or thought of except just living. City dwellers make money, make reputations (good and bad), make museums and subways, make charitable institutions, make with a hysteric rapidity, like excited spiders, more and yet more complications in the mazy labyrinths of their lives, but they never make each others' acquaintances . . . and that is all that is worth doing in the world.

We, who live in Hillsboro', know that they are to be pitied, not blamed, for this fatal omission. We realize that only in Hillsboro' and places like it can one have "deep, full life and contact with the vitalizing stream of humanity." We know that in the very nature of humanity the city is a small and narrow world, the village a great and wide one, and that the utmost efforts of city dwellers will not avail to break the bars of the prison where they are shut in, each with his own kind. They may look out from the windows upon a great and varied throng, as the beggar munching a crust may look in at a banqueting hall, but the people they are forced to live with are exactly like themselves; and that way lies not only monomania but an ennui that makes the blessing of life savorless.

If this does not seem the plainest possible statement of fact take a concrete instance. Can a banker in the city by any possibility come to know what kind of an individual is the remote impersonal creature who waits on him in a department store? Most bankers recognize with a misguided joy this natural wall between themselves and people who are not bankers, and add to it as many stones of their own quarrying as possible; but they are not shut off from all the quickening diversity of life any more effectually than the college-settlement boys' Sunday-school brand of banker. The latter may try as hard as he pleases, he simply cannot achieve real acquaintanceship with a "storekeeper," as we call them, any more than the clerk can achieve real acquaintanceship with him. Lack of any elements of common life form as impassable a barrier as lack of a common language, whereas with us all the life we have is common. Every one is needed to live it.

There can be no city dweller of experience who does not know the result of this herding of the same kind of people together, this intellectual and moral inbreeding. To the accountant who knows only accounts, the world comes to seem like one great ledger, and account-keeping the only vital pursuit in life. To the banker who knows only bankers, the world seems one great bank filled with money, accompanied by people. The prison doors of uniformity are closed inexorably upon them.

And then what happens? Why, when anything goes wrong with their trumpery account books, or their trashy money, these poor folk are like blind men who have lost their staves. With all the world before them they dare not continue to go forward. We in Hillsboro are sorry for the account-

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keepers who disappear forever, fleeing from all who know them because their accounts have come out crooked, we pity the banker who blows out his brains when something has upset his bank; but we can't help feeling with this compassion an admixture of the extreme impatience we have for those Prussian school-boys who jump out of third-story windows because they did not reach a certain grade in their Latin examinations. Life is not accounts, or banks, or even Latin examinations, and it is a sign of inexperience to think it so. The trouble with the despairing banker is that he has never had a chance to become aware of the comforting vastness of the force which animates him, in common with all the rest of humanity, to which force a bank failure is no apocalyptic end of Creation, but a mere incident or trial of strength like a fall in a slippery road. Absorbed in his solitary progress, the banker has forgotten that his business in life is not so much to keep from falling as to get up again and press forward.

If the man to whom the world was a bank had not been so inexorably shut away from the bracing, tonic shock of knowing men utterly diverse, to whom the world was just as certainly only a grocery store, or a cobbler's bench, he might have come to believe in a world that is none of these things and is big enough to take them all in; and he might have been alive this minute, a credit to himself, useful to the world and doubtless very much more agreeable to his family than in the days of his blind arrogance.

The pathetic feature of this universal inexperience among city dwellers of real life and real people is that it is really entirely enforced and involuntary. At heart they crave knowledge of real life and sympathy with their fellow-men as starving men do food. In Hillsboro' we explain to ourselves the enormous amount of novel-reading and play-going in the great cities as due to a perverted form of this natural hunger for human life. If people are so situated they can't get it fresh, they will take it canned, which is undoubtedly good for those in the canning business; but we feel that we who have better food ought not to be expected to treat it very seriously. We can't help smiling at the life-and-death discussions of literary people about their preferences in style and plot and treatment . . . their favorite brand on the can, so to speak.

To tell the truth, all novels seem to us badly written, they are so faint and faded in comparison to the brilliant colors of the life which palpitates up and down our village street, called by strangers, "so quaint and sleepy-looking." What does the author of a novel do for you, after all, even the best author? He presents to you people not nearly so interesting as your next-door neighbors, makes them do things not nearly so exciting as what happened to your grandfather, and doles out to you in meagre paragraphs snatches of that comprehending and consolatory philosophy of life, which long ago you should have learned to manufacture for yourself out of every incident in your daily routine. Of course, if you don't know your next-door neighbors, and have never had time to listen to what happened to your grandfather, and are too busy catching trains to philosophize on those subjects if you did know them, no more remains to be said. By all means patronize the next shop you see which displays in its show windows canned romances, adventures, tragedies, farces, and the like line of goods. Live vicariously, if you can't at first hand; but don't be annoyed at our pity for your method of passing blindfold through life.

And don't expect to find such a shop in our village. To open one there would be like trying to crowd out the great trees on Hemlock Mountain by planting a Noah's-Ark garden among them. Romances, adventures, tragedies, and farces . . . why, we are the characters of those plots. Every child who runs past the house starts a new story, every old man whom we leave sleeping in the burying-ground by the Necronsett River is the ending of another . . . or perhaps the beginning of a sequel. Do you say that in the city a hundred more children run past the windows of your apartment than along our solitary street, and that funeral processions cross your every walk abroad? True, but they are stories written in a tongue incomprehensible to you. You look at the covers, you may even flutter the leaves and look at the pictures, but you cannot tell what they are all about. You are like people bored and yawning at a performance of a tragedy by Sophocles, be-

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cause the actors speak in Greek. So dreadful and moving a thing as a man's sudden death may happen before your eyes, but you do not know enough of what it means to be moved by it. For you it is not really a man who dies. It is the abstract idea of a man, leaving behind him abstract possibilities of a wife and children. You knew nothing of him, you know nothing of them, you shudder, look the other way, and hurry along, your heart a little more blunted to the sorrows of others, a little more remote from your fellows even than before.

All Hillsboro' is more stirred than that, both to sympathy and active help, by the news that Mrs. Brownell has broken her leg. It means something unescapably definite to us, about which we not only can, but must take action. It means that her sickly oldest daughter will not get the care she needs if somebody doesn't go to help out; it means that if we do not do something that bright boy of hers will have to leave school, just when he is in the way of winning a scholarship in college; it means, in short, a crisis in several human lives, which by the mere fact of being known calls forth sympathy as irresistibly as sunshine in May opens the leaf buds.

Just as it is only one lover in a million who can continue to love his mistress during a lifetime of absolute separation from her, so it is one man in a million who can continue his sympathy and interest in his fellow-men without continual close contact with them. The divine feeling of responsibility for the well-being of others is diluted and washed away in great cities by the overwhelming impersonal flood of vast numbers; in villages it is strengthened by the sight, apparent to the dullest eyes, of immediate personal and visible application. In other words, we are not only the characters of our unwritten stories, but also part authors. Something of the final outcome depends upon us, something of the creative instinct of the artist is stirred to life within every one of us . . . however unconscious of it in our countrified simplicity we may be. The sympathy we feel for a distressed neighbor has none of the impotent sterility of a reader's sympathy for a distressed character in a book. There is always a chance to try to help, and if that fail, to try again and yet again. Death writes the only *Finis* to our stories, and since a chance to start over again has been so unfailingly granted us here, we cannot but feel that Death may mean only turning over another page.

I suppose we do not appreciate the seriousness of fiction-writing, nor its importance to those who cannot get any nearer to real life. And yet it is not that we are unprogressive. Our young people, returning from college, or from visits to the city, freshen and bring up to date our ideas on literature as rigorously as they do our sleeves and hats; but after a short stay in Hillsboro' even these conscientious young missionaries of culture turn away from the feeble plots of Ibsen and the tame inventions of Bernard Shaw to the really exciting, perplexing, and stimulating events in the life of the village grocer.

In "Ghosts," Ibsen preaches a terrible sermon on the responsibility of one generation for the next, but not all his relentless logic can move you to the sharp throb of horrified sympathy you feel as you see Nelse Pettingrew's poor mother run down the street, her shawl flung hastily over her head, framing a face of despairing resolve, such as can never look at you out of the pages of a book. Somebody has told her that Nelse has been drinking again and "is beginning to get ugly." For Hillsboro' is no model village, but the world entire, with hateful forces of evil lying in wait for weakness. Who will not lay down "Ghosts" to watch, with a painfully beating heart, the progress of this living "Mrs. Alving" past the house, leading, persuading, coaxing the burly weakling, who will be saved from a week's debauch if she can only get him safely home now, and keep him quiet till "the fit goes by."

At the sight everybody in Hillsboro' realizes that Nelse "got it from his father," with a penetrating sense of the tragedy of heredity, quite as stimulating to self-control in the future as Ibsen is able to make us feel in "Ghosts." But we know something better than Ibsen, for Mrs. Pettingrew is no "Mrs. Alving." She is a plain, hard-featured woman who takes in sewing for a living, and she is quite unlettered, but she is a general in the army of spiritual forces. She does not despair, she does not give up like the half-hearted mother in Ghosts, she does not waste her

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strength in concealments; she stands up to her enemy and fights. She fought the wild beast in Nelse's father, hand to hand, all his life, and he died a better man than when she married him. Undaunted, she fought it in Nelse as a boy, and now as a man; and in the flowering of his physical forces when the wind of his youth blows most wildly through the hateful thicket of inherited weaknesses she generally wins the battle.

And this she has done with none of the hard, consistent strength and intelligence of your make-believe heroine in a book, so disheartening an example to our faltering impulses for good. She has been infinitely human and pathetically fallible; she has cried out and hesitated and complained and done the wrong thing and wept and failed and still fought on, till to think of her is, for the weakest of us, like a bugle call to high endeavor. Nelse is now a better man than his father, and we shut up "Ghosts" with impatience that Ibsen should have selected that story to tell out of all the tales there must have been in the village where *he* lived.

Now imagine if you can . . . for I cannot even faintly indicate to you . . . our excitement when Nelse begins to look about him for a wife. In the first place, we are saved by our enforced closeness to real people from wasting our energies in the profitless outcry of economists, that people like Nelse should be prohibited from having children. It occurs to us that perhaps the handsome fellow's immense good-humor and generosity are as good inheritance as the selfishness and cold avarice of priggish young Horace Gallatin, who never drinks a drop. Perhaps at some future date all people who are not perfectly worthy to have children will be kept from it by law. In Hillsboro', we think, that after such a decree the human race would last just one generation; but that is not the point now. The question is, will Nelse find a wife who will carry on his mother's work, or will he not?"

If you think you are excited over a serial story because you can't guess if "Lady Eleanor" really stole the diamonds or not, it is only because you have no idea of what excitement is. You are in a condition of stagnant lethargy compared to that of Hillsboro' over the question whether Nelse will marry Ellen Brownell, "our Ellen," or Flossie Merton, the ex-factory girl, who came up from Montpelier to wait at the tavern, and who is said to have a taste for drink herself.

Old Mrs. Perkins, whom everybody had thought sunk in embittered discontent about the poverty and isolation of her last days, roused herself not long ago and gave Ellen her cherished tortoise-shell back-comb, and her pretty white silk shawl to wear to village parties; and racked with rheumatism, as the old woman is, she says she sits up at night to watch the young people go back from choir rehearsal so that she can see which girl Nelse is "beauing home." Could the most artfully contrived piece of fiction more blessedly sweep the self-centred complainings of old age into generous and vitalizing interest in the lives of others?

As for the "pity and terror," the purifying effects of which are so vaunted in Greek tragedies, could Æschylus himself have plunged us into a more awful desolation of pity than the day we saw old Squire Marvin being taken along the street on his way to the insane asylum? All the self-made miseries of his long life were in our minds, the wife he had loved and killed with the harsh violence of a nature he had never learned to control, the children he had adored unreasonably and spoiled and turned against, and they on him with a violence like his own, the people he had tried to benefit with so much egotistic pride mixed in his kindness that his favors made him hated, his vanity, his generosity, his despairing outcries against the hostility he had so well earned . . . at the sight of the end of all this there was no heart in Hillsboro' that was not wrung with a pity and terror more penetrating and purifying even than Shakespeare has made the centuries feel for Lear.

Ah, at the foot of Hemlock Mountain we do not need books to help us feel the meaning of life!

Nor do we need them to help us feel the meaning of death. You, in the cities, living with a feverish haste in the present only, and clutching at it as a starving man does at his last crust, you cannot understand the comforting sense we have of belonging almost as much to the past and future as to the present. Our own youth is not dead

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to us as yours is, from the lack of anything to recall it to you, and people we love do not slip quickly into that bitter oblivion to which the dead are consigned by those too hurried to remember. They are not remembered perfunctorily for their "good qualities" which are carved on their tomb-stones, but all the quaint and dear absurdities which make up personality, are embalmed in the leisurely, peaceable talk of the village, still enriched by all that they brought to it. We are not afraid of the event which men call death, because we know that, in so far as we have deserved it, the same homely immortality awaits us.

Every spring, at the sight of the first cowslip, our old people laugh and say to each other, "Will you *ever* forget how Aunt Dorcas used to take us children out cowslipping, and how she never would lift her skirt to cross the log by the mill, and always fell in the brook?" The log has mouldered away a generation ago, the mill is only a heap of blackened timbers, but as they speak, they are not only children again, but Aunt Dorcas lives again for them and for us who never saw her . . . dear, silly, kind old Aunt Dorcas, past-mistress in the lovely art of spoiling children. Just so the children we have spoiled, the people we have lived with, will continue to keep us living with them. We shall have time to grow quite used to whatever awaits us after the tangled rose-bushes of Hillsboro' burying-ground bloom over our heads, before we shall have gradually faded painlessly away from the life of men and women. We sometimes feel that, almost alone in the harassed and weary modern world, we love that life, and yet we are the least afraid to leave it.

It is usually dark when the shabby little narrow-gauge train brings us home to Hillsboro' from wanderings in the great world, and the big pond by the station is full of stars. Up on the hill the lights of the village twinkle against the blurred mass of Hemlock Mountain, and above them the stars again. It is very quiet, the station is black and deserted, the road winding up to the village glimmers uncertainly in the starlight, and dark forms hover vaguely about. Strangers say that it is a very depressing station at which to arrive, but we know better. There is no feeling in the world like that with which one starts up the white road, stars below him in the quiet pool, stars above him in the quiet sky, friendly lights showing the end of his journey is at hand, and the soft twilight full of voices all familiar, all welcoming.

Poor old Uncle Abner Rhodes, returning from an attempt to do business in the city, where he had lost his money, his health, and his hopes, said he didn't see how going up to Heaven could be so very different from walking up the hill from the station with Hemlock Mountain in front of you. He said it didn't seem to him as though even in Heaven you could feel more than then that you had got back where there are some folks, that you had got back home.

Sometimes when the stars hang very bright over Hemlock Mountain and the Necronsett River sings loud in the dusk, we remember the old man's speech, and, though we smile at his simplicity, we think, too, that the best which awaits us can only be very much better, but not so very different from what we have known here.

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PHYLLIDA

By Temple Bailey

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROSE O'NEILL WILSON

PHYLLIDA'S mother played bridge all day and until midnight and after, and Phyllida's father gambled in stocks, but Phyllida, trained by the nuns, and having spent most of her days in a rose garden, and most of her nights in a small white room with a crucifix over her bed, was a thing of fire and dew and ideals.

"In our home," she told the Poet, "we'll always burn candles and we'll have a sun dial in the garden."

"If we live in a flat there will be no garden," her lover reminded her.

"We can still burn candles," Phyllida stated, "and I can have window boxes and feed the white doves on the sill."

"Dear heart," murmured the Poet, knowing that the doves would be slate-colored pigeons, but putting off the moment of disillusion.

With such capacity for romance, it was not wonderful that Phyllida should agree to an elopement.

It was the last resort of the Poet. He had asked for Phyllida's hand as a gentleman should, of her father first, and failing there, of her mother. And both of them had stated that they had other plans—there was the multi-millionaire, Fortunatus; and Phyllida should not marry a poor man.

"I am not poor," the Poet told them, "I do not live by my poetry."

Phyllida's father said that poverty was a matter of comparison, that Phyllida would inherit millions, the Poet could, it seemed, give her only thousands.

"I can give her many things that she does not get at home," said the Poet, flushing.

"For example?" asked Phyllida's father.

"An atmosphere of good breeding," said the Poet, succinctly, and took his hat and went out.

"Of course now they will never consent," he told Phyllida that night. Phyllida's mother was playing bridge in the music-room with three feminine dinner guests, and Phyllida's father was smoking in the library with three masculine ones, and Phyllida and her Poet met clandestinely in the garage. There was no light except such as the moon gave through a high square of window above them. The shadows of the big touring car hid them, and the chauffeur, with the Poet's tip in his pocket, was chaffing the cook at the kitchen door.

"They will never consent," the Poet repeated, "I regret that I was impertinent. But there was something in his manner——"

"There is always something in his manner," said Phyllida calmly, "you needn't try to explain——"

"The thing for me to do is to go away," the Poet said feeling that, as a Poet, he should have put it more exquisitely, but with no heart to try.

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Phyllida's face was uplifted. Her sheer blue gown fell in straight folds to her feet. In the moonlight, her hair shone nimbus-like about her head.

"You shall not go," she said faintly. Then, almost whispering, "Kiss me——"

It was the first time she had permitted it. She was half a little nun, half-awakened woman.

Out of a wonderful silence she murmured, "Nothing can part us now, beloved——"

It was then that they decided to run away. The Poet realized that it was a childish and hackneyed thing to do, but there seemed no other way to get Phyllida.

To Phyllida it was the great consummation.

"To-morrow night," she said, standing away from him a little, "we will go over the hills and far away—in the moonlight——"

And the Poet, carried out of himself by her youth and beauty, cast doubt to the winds.

He caught her hands in his, and, at arms' length, swung her with him from side to side, rhythmically, as he chanted.

"I know a little house—set in the midst of a tangled garden and beyond the garden are reeds and rushes—and beyond the reeds and rushes a little lake. And beyond the lake the hills are purple against a golden sky—and the moon hangs low when it is late—our honeymoon."

They both laughed, and the Poet kissed Phyllida—the second kiss, which could never be as wonderful as the first, but which was wonderful enough in all conscience.

But when the Poet had left Phyllida and walked the city streets alone, he was burdened by the feeling that he ought not to let her run away with him. For the Poet, with the thinning of his locks on his temples had grown wise, and he knew that while one may put into verses all the moon-lighted fancies that one pleases, one must live life as it really is.

Playing bridge in the music-room with three feminine dinner guests.—Page 754.

But Phyllida, troubled by no doubts, packed into a big trunk all the fine sheer garments that the nuns had made for her. And there was one delicate robe that was embroidered about the shoulders with true-lovers' knots. Sister Beatrice had wished to leave off the true-lovers' knots, but Phyllida had overruled her.

"I shall keep it for my bridal," she had said, "and I shall want to wear it because you made it."

There was nothing among the pretty

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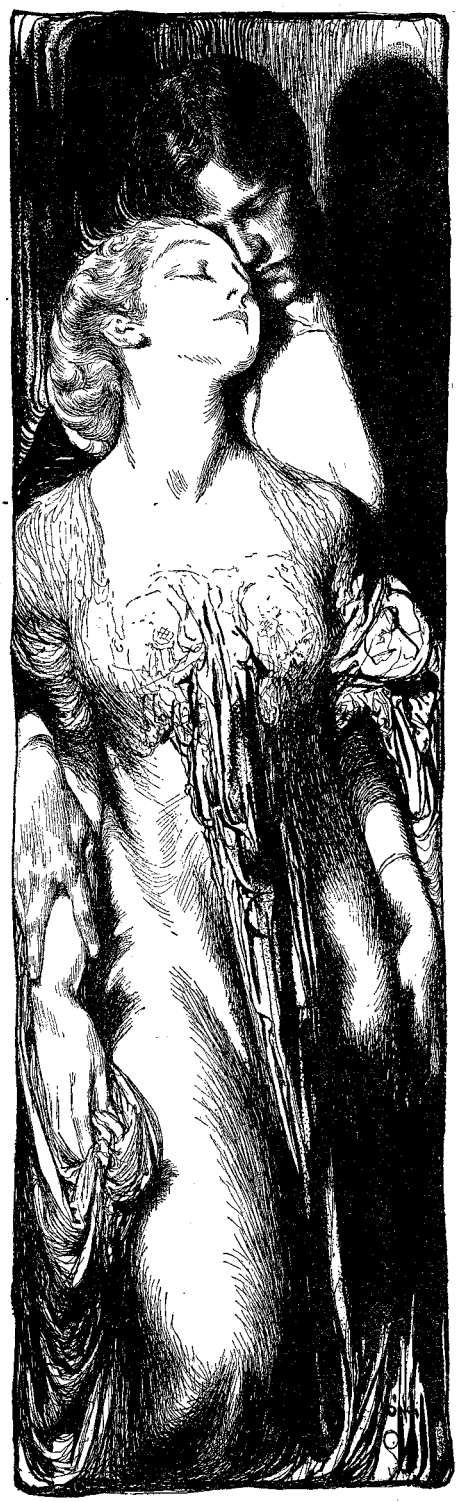

"Nothing can part us now."—Page 755.

things that Phyllida's mother had made, and if there had been Phyllida would not have put it in that trunk. Her mother had no place in her wonder world. Neither had her father, and so she left behind all the jewels he had given her, piling them up in a glittering heap on her dressing table. But she took with her an amethyst rosary that Father Rosario had brought to her from Rome. Father Rosario had heard the confessions of the girls at school. Phyllida being of another faith had made no formal confession, but she had asked Father Rosario many things.

"Suppose my father and mother should want me to marry some one I do not love," she had demanded, "should I be obedient then?"

He had looked down at her with a grave face, but back in his eyes there had been a little flame.

"Love has not found you yet. Wait until it comes."

"But when it comes," Phyllida urged, "wouldn't it be right to forsake all others —and go——?"

They had reached the little shrine at the end of the garden. Above it two white doves cooed and caressed. The blossoming almonds on each side flung up pink branches to the sapphire sky. The spring breezes murmured and sang. Father Rosario caught his breath quickly.

"God will tell you, dear child," he had said, gently, "and your own heart."

And now her heart had told her—and presently—she would ask God——

So when everything was ready, she went into the alcove, where her bed stood, and the curtains fell about her and hid her, and the room was very still.

The moonlight touched the jewels on the dressing table, so that they seemed to burn in a circle of white fire, and within that circle there appeared, all at once, a long white hand, with tapering fingers.

But as the fingers clutched at the jewels and picked them up, there was a click, and the lights flared.

"Mother," Phyllida cried sharply, "what are you doing?"

"I thought you were in bed," her mother stammered.

"I was in the alcove saying my prayers," Phyllida told her, "what are you doing with my jewels?"

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"As I came by the door I saw them—and —and I felt they were not safe——"

Phyllida's startled eyes questioned, for her room was at the end of the hall and there was nothing beyond.

But her mother's glance met her's steadily. "It's very late," she said, with a yawn, "you ought to be in bed—but you'd better lock these up," and she let the half dozen rings and bracelets, and the string of pearls and the chain with the diamond heart slip through her fingers reluctantly.

Phyllida's tense figure relaxed. All the sinister suggestion of that first sight of the tall figure in the shimmering white gown had departed, and she flung out her hands in a gesture of relief.

"Oh, mother," she cried, breathlessly, "I was so frightened—I thought it was a thief!"

All that night Phyllida lay wide-eyed in the darkness, for it was her last night in her father's house, and there were things to think of. Things that had been and that were to be.

The night waned, and the dawn came in gray through the windows, and there was the patter of rain against the panes, which was a bad omen for Phyllida's wedding morn.

But Phyllida cared nothing for omens. Rain or shine she was to marry the Poet, and as she went downstairs her cheeks matched the pink of her gown, and her eyes were full of dreams.

When she came into the dining-room, her father and mother said "Good-morning," and went on eating grapefruit. And Phyllida said "Good-morning," and ate *her* grapefruit. Even the frigidity of the domestic atmosphere could not dim her radiance. But there had been a time when her heart had cried out for the long lines of smiling girl faces, and Sister Beatrice's morning benediction.

When he had finished breakfast, Phyllida's father laid down his newspaper and started to go, but Phyllida's mother stopped him.

"You might as well tell Phyllida now," she said, "she will have to know——"

And Phyllida's father rested his arms on the back of his chair and stared at his plate and said, "I'm ruined. Yesterday was a most unfortunate day—I have lost everything——"

"Love has not found you yet."—Page 756.

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Though he spoke calmly enough, the whiteness of his handsome face made Phyllida catch her breath and say, "Oh, I am so sorry for you, father."

Her mother's polished finger tips tapped the mahogany impatiently, "If you were really sorry you would marry Fortunatus."

It seemed to Phyllida that, for a moment, a gleam of hope lighted her father's face.

"Sister Beatrice is fifty—but you should have heard her laugh."

Her mother shivered. "One might as well be dead as out of the world——"

But Phyllida's father put out a shaking hand and touched his daughter's arm.

"What made them happy?"

In a sudden mood of exaltation, Phyllida caught the shaking hand in hers.

As the fingers clutched at the jewels, there was a click, and the lights flared.—Page 755.

She looked from one to the other. "But —I do not love him," she protested.

"You might—if it were not for the Poet," her mother said, "he has filled your head with fancies——"

Phyllida's cheeks flamed. She pushed back her chair and stood up. "And if I married Fortunatus, what then?"

"We should all have plenty of money," said her mother, and her father turned his face to her with that haggard gleam of hope.

"But should we have happiness?" Phyllida flung out.

They stared at her, the little slender child, who, for eighteen years had been mothered and fathered in a convent.

"I can see no happiness here," Phyllida went on, "at the convent we were all happy."

"You were all young," said her mother.

"Father," she cried, "it was love. Love of one another—and of God!"

That afternoon, while the rain fell ceaselessly, Phyllida wrote a note to the Poet.

"I cannot go with you to-night. You will see by the evening papers that my father has lost everything. And it doesn't seem right that he should lose me, too. This morning he kissed me, for the first time since I was a little girl—and, after all, he is my father——"

And when she had added a few words, that were to echo forever in the Poet's heart, she sealed the envelope and went back to her desk to get some money from her silver purse to pay the messenger.

But the purse was not in the desk, and though she hunted in every nook and corner of her room, she could not find it, and in

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it was all the money that she had saved from her allowance, so that she might not go to the Poet empty-handed.

Then, with fear tugging at her heart, she said to the man, "I cannot find my purse. I will go and get the money."

She sped up the hall to her mother's chamber, but found it empty, and, guided by the sound of shrill laughter, she went down to the music-room, where, set in the middle of the polished floor, was a little spindle-legged table, and about the table were four women playing cards. And Phyllida's mother, with two spots burning red in her cheeks, was talking eagerly, as, with her long white fingers, she shook a roll of bills from a silver purse.

"There," she said, triumphantly, to a tall dark woman in a rose-colored gown who was adding up rows of figures on an ivory tablet, "how much do I owe you, Juliana?"

And thus, with her daughter's money, did Phyllida's mother pay her debts at bridge.

Phyllida crept away, unnoticed, and climbed the stairs, saying over and over again, passionately, "She stole it, and she would have stolen my jewels."

At the head of the stairs was the library, and as she passed the curtained doorway, she heard a voice, Fortunatus' voice, and he was saying:

"If I marry Phyllida, I will fix things up for you."

And her father's voice shook and broke as he answered, "I cannot sell her——"

She shrank back into a shadowy corner as Fortunatus came forth, with his face flaming with anger, and flung himself out of the front door. After the noise of his exodus, a strange stillness seemed to hang over the house, broken once by the shrill laughter from below.

Phyllida parted the curtains. Her father sat at his desk, looking drearily out at the driving rain.

"Father," Phyllida whispered, and he opened his arms, and she crept into them.

And after a long time she whispered, "To-night the Poet and I were going to run away—but now I cannot leave you."

Her father smoothed her hair back from her face with a shaking hand. "You must marry him," he said, "and tell him to take you away from it all—all that we have taught you——"

"There's a little house in a tangled garden," Phyllida told him, eagerly, "with a lake beyond where we will spend our honeymoon."

"Tell him to keep you there always," her father's tone was almost fierce, "and when things get too much for me here, I will come sometimes, and visit you."

"Come now," Phyllida was aflame with the idea. "Come with us now, and we will all run away together."

She saw a new light come into his face and then die away into weariness as the shrill laughter made mocking echoes in the quiet house.

"I cannot."

"Yes. Yes." she insisted. "Mother wants to go and visit Juliana. She has always wanted to go, and you can leave a note. And you can stay with us for a time,

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and the Poet, why, the Poet can help you plan your future, father."

"What does the Poet know of finance?" her father scoffed.

"Nothing," Phyllida admitted, securely, "but he knows a lot of lovely things about living—and so does Father Rosario—and Sister Beatrice."

"Then they shall teach me," said her father humbly.

So Phyllida went upstairs and sent another note to the Poet, that made him open his eyes and read it again, and when he had read it a third time, he read it through a mist.

"Dear heart," he said.

And that night the three of them ran away together. The Poet, who knew life, and Phyllida, who knew love, and the old man who had everything to learn.

THREE O'CLOCK

(MORNING)

By Ridgely Torrence

THE jewel-blue electric flowers
Are cold upon their iron trees.
Upraised, the deadly harp of rails
Whines for its interval of ease.
The stones keep all their daily speech
Buried, but can no more forget
Than would a water-vacant beach
The hour when it was wet.

A whitened few wane out like moons,
Ghastly, from some torn edge of shade;
A drowning one, a reeling one,
And one still loitering after trade.
On high the candor of a clock
Portions the dark with solemn sound.
The burden of the bitten rock
Moans up from underground.

Far down the street a shutting door
Echoes the yesterday that fled
Among the days that should have been,
Which people cities of the dead.
The banners of the steam unfold
Upon the towers to meet the day;
The lights go out in red and gold,
But Time goes out in gray.

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THE POINT OF VIEW

TWENTY years ago, come this Christmas-tide, there appeared in these pages, almost in the space which the Point of View now occupies, a paper that has fairly won its place in our permanent literature and that has borne, through the lapsing years, a message of courage and cheer to many a human heart. "A Christmas Sermon" was the last of the series of "end-papers" that, during the year 1888, Robert Louis Stevenson contributed to this magazine, and he conceived it in a valedictory spirit thinking only at the time of the conclusion of his twelve-months task, though in point of fact, its composition coinciding with his departure from these shores, it may well be taken as a farewell message to a land where its author had experienced much kindness and for which in turn he cherished a hearty affection. Far outreaching, however, any such geographical limitation, it embodies for all mankind a message of high spiritual significance—the serious conclusions of a serious son of a serious race; and as such it has appealed to all kinds and conditions of men.

The "Christmas Sermon" Twenty Years After.

It was indeed held at the time of its publication to lack the joyousness which we associate with the Christmas season, and to paint the picture of conduct in too sombre hues; and we find Stevenson writing to his friendly critic Sidney Colvin: "I agree with you the lights seem a little turned down; the truth is I was far through, and came none too soon to the South Seas, where I was to recover peace of body and mind. *And however low the lights, the stuff is true.*" I have italicized the last sentence, for therein lies the sturdy, unblinking, clear-eyed faculty of looking ascertained truth in the face—however unprepossessing truth might appear to one fully appreciative of the ease of conformity and the comfort that lies in evasion of a private standard of conduct—that characterizes every written word of Stevenson—and more of his acts than our humanity can ordinarily count on the credit side of life's ledger.

Viewed in the light of our longer perspective, moreover, does this criticism hold, and does the author's qualified acquiescence that the light is dim indicate more than the mood of the artist, who knows better than any one else the shortcomings of an accomplished work compared with the ideal present at its first conception? For surely at the Christmas season, "from all its associations, whether domestic or religious, suggesting thoughts of joy," no message was ever penned that more concisely formulates a standard of conduct to which any honest soul may more ardently, aye and with such joyous hope, aspire, than the words so fittingly chosen to commemorate the man upon the monument erected by the "loving hearts" of our brothers in San Francisco.

"To be honest, to be kind—to earn a little and to spend a little less, to make upon the whole a family happier for his presence, to renounce when that shall be necessary and not be embittered, to keep a few friends but these without capitulation—above all, on the same grim condition, to keep friends with himself—here is a task for all that a man has of fortitude and delicacy." Acknowledging the grim condition and the necessity of both fortitude and delicacy, does not this suffice to engender that hope, springing eternal, which constitutes the incentive and the reward of life? Evidently these words have been so taken, and have been graven in characters more enduring than those of the San Francisco monument in the hearts of those who guard "the glimmering hope that perhaps we do better than we think." The enduring mark of enduring literature, the fitting words married to the fitting thought, place the "Christmas Sermon" high among the works of one whose art was as his life, one of gallant endeavor; who in both respects often builded better than he knew, and also consistently and bravely acted up to the gospel he preached in "Æs Triplex." "By all means begin your folio; even if the doctor does not give you a year, even if he hesitates about a month, make one brave push and see what can be accomplished in a week."

Those who were near Stevenson at the time when the "Christmas Sermon" was written know under what circumstances of physical pain and mental anxiety the words

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were penned; but they know as well the serene outlook upon whatever the future reserved, and the unfailing joy and interest in his craft that sustained him. This is the true Christmas spirit, to look back on the year that is spent and forward to the year that is coming with equal consciousness of and determination for sustained effort; to have done and to do a little to the best of one's ability; and to do this joyously so that we may honestly inscribe upon our hearts:

"'This is the study where a smiling God
Beholds each day my stage of labour trod,
And smiles and praises, and I hear Him say:
'The day is brief; be diligent in play.'"

New Antiques and Old Novelties

WHY is it that there are only thirty-six dramatic situations and only thirty-nine merry jests? Why is there nothing new under the sun? Why is it that we are doomed to disappointment when we enter the shop of the enterprising tradesman whose sign declares that he deals in "New Novelties and New Antiques"? It is the new novelty that we fail to find in his wares; his novelties are certain to be old; and it is only his antiques that are new. There is, indeed, this difference that the antiques pretend to be old and are young, whereas the novelties vaunt their youth and yet reveal themselves as hoary with age.

There seems to be no limit to the willingness of mankind to say ditto to itself, in spite of its eternal longing to hear and to tell some new thing. Whately was right when he said that most Irish bulls had been calves in Greece. And as we smile we wonder whether this is not the echo of some Grecian witticism. The worthy Père Bonhours asked gravely whether a German could have wit—*si un Allemand peut avoir de l'esprit;* and, of course, he could not foresee Heine, a German who was the very quintessence of wit and *esprit* and *Geist*. Yet even Heine trod in the trail blazed by those who went before him; and when he said that Victor Hugo's muse had two left hands, he may—or he may not—have been aware of Rivarol's earlier declaration that an Englishwoman might be beautiful, except she had two left arms.

One of the most characteristic of Mr. Kipling's tales of his "Soldiers Three," is that narrating the stain upon "His Private Honor," which can be removed only by the willingness of his superior to meet him, man to man, with the weapons bestowed by nature. A score of years or more before this British short story was written the same situation had been utilized by Labiche in a most amusing three-act farce, entitled the "Vivacités du Capitaine Jic." The situation is precisely the same in the French play and in the English tale, although the French soldier is a cavalryman and the English soldier belongs to the infantry; and yet it is inconceivable that Mr. Kipling should have taken it over from Labiche. And, if it comes to that, who trod the trail before the French dramatist? And in what specimen of oriental folk-lore may we some day find a remoter original? Perhaps the late Max Müller would have explained it away as an obvious sun-myth, the obscured honor of the private being only the passage of the shadow of the moon across the earth during an eclipse.

The pathetic situation of the guilty wife forgiven by her nobler husband at the hour of death is in "Froufrou," the most Parisian of latter-day dramas, but it is also in Heywood's "Woman Killed with Kindness," a most characteristic Elizabethan play. Probably it has its analogues in Greek drama or in Greek epic. The most striking effect in the "Danichefs," the Franco-Russian play to which the younger Dumas lent his easy wit and his dramaturgic skill and which had its vogue on the stage in Paris and in New York a quarter of a century ago, is to be found in the "Electra" of Euripides. And the central episode of the late Mr. Hearne's "Margaret Fleming" (the moment when the devoted wife gives suck to the illegitimate babe of her husband) has its parallel in the attitude of Andromache to the offspring of Hector. New antiques are plentiful enough if we take the trouble to collect them; the real rarities, which the collector must seek in vain, are the new novelties.

A Modern Idyl

BEYOND my apple tree, high against the blue, he sits upon my neighbor's roof and hammers in the sun. The birds sing round him in the friendly green branches; the fragrance of those young leaves and of the fresh-cut shingles must be sweet. He works in leisurely fashion, tears off a few old shingles; sits and thinks; nails on a few new ones, and thinks again. I find myself envying him his sense of endless time; his way of throwing down his hammer upon the stroke of five, with a nail half driven in, and hurrying down the ladder, the first bit of haste he has shown; envying, too, his——

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It must have been my Scotch maid who put it into my head that he was lazy, for such an idea would never have occurred to me in regard to Labor, whose struggles I have followed with deep sympathy. I suppose I might describe myself as a parlor socialist who makes not infrequent visits to the kitchen. It was on one of these occasions that I heard the following astounding statements:

"I never see such good-for-nothin' men in my life as the men in this country," said Janet. The painters had been busy in her pantry, and she was vainly searching for traces of their toil. "They've been here all day, and what have they done? Scared the cats, and that's all." As ill-luck would have it, the men employed by the state commission to ferret out gypsy moths were working out in our yard that day. Janet eyed them scornfully. "It's took 'em all the mornin' to cut off three knot-holes and tack 'em up," she observed. "End they've spent the afternoon lookin' for their hammer. What does the state pay 'em, then, for standin' with their hands in their pockets? Na, na, the women in my country work a deal harder than the men in this."

It set me to thinking, for I have reason to respect Janet's power of observation, and the grim logic of her conclusions, though one has to make allowance for a touch of exaggeration, due, doubtless, to Calvinistic theology, in her statement of truth. Day after day, while my neighbor's roof grows all too slowly, I have watched the village Laboring Man in whatever aspects he has happened to come under my eye; gardener, raking leaves or clipping grass; carpenter, sawing boards; mason, plastering the house that is going up near at hand, and I find it hard to square him with the Laboring Man of the pamphlets, the "hardly entreated brother," of Carlyle and Ruskin. Miners and factory hands are, of course, beyond my observation as I sit at my window and toil, and I speak only of the workers I have watched. So sitting and so watching, I have found it in my heart to envy the wage-earner his happy irresponsibility and freedom from anxiety. His is no risk; the employer takes that; no haste—is not delay money in his pocket? no gnawing anxiety lest the result be less good than the best. For sweet security, tranquillity, freedom from strain, there has been nothing like his lot since the days of Theocritus, of sheep browsing secure in grassy pastures by the sea, of peaceful noontide piping in the shade. I, sitting at my desk and gnawing my pen, doomed to eternal vigilance in labor of the mind, cry out upon you Laboring Man, that it is not fair! It is as if the primal curse lay upon you but for stated hours, and, at the stroke of five, you were privileged to leave the rough fields of toil and go back to Eden for more hours than you spend outside. The curse, as spoken, recognized no eight-hour law. Should I not appreciate it, do you suppose, if instead of being haunted by shadows of ideas even in my dreams, I could but begin thinking at eight-thirty, and quit upon the stroke of twelve? Could I but train my mind to take a noontide rest upon a sunny wall, or to slumber away an hour under the maple as you do in your high leisure, should I not be content? There you are now, piping in the shade, though it is but a clay pipe and indifferent tobacco that you use. Would I might learn your way of working, slow stroke by stroke, with intervals of gracious waiting, and get rid of this eternal, and infernal, impulse goading me on to make things better! Would I might toil for stated hours, with time for sunshine and bird songs! *Et ego in Arcadia*, if it might be! Why should you be paid simply because the hours pass, and draw Father Time's wage for sending the sand through the hour-glass? Shall a man receive hire because Saturn, Venus, and the rest are swinging with measured pace around the sun?

Would, too, that with this golden relaxation of the present, I could share the happy assurance of result of the market-man, careless of destination, and whistling cheerily, who is even now delivering our chops at our neighbor's house, eight numbers down the street. All paths are perhaps alike desirable in Arcady, but is this quite true here? Such faith that all will come out well exists not elsewhere outside the Islands of the Blessed. It will doubtless aid you in the digestion of your luncheon, but oh, who will be digesting mine?

Yet, Laboring Man, you are missing something. Is it sour grapes that, at this moment, I am sure that all is not well with you in your *dolce-far-niente* state? There is not enough uncertainty in it to pique you to effort; one may not, with impunity, be cocksure of life. Is it not written in our ancient book of wisdom, nature, that the organism which has nothing to contend with shall die out? This worry, this uncertainty, this taking risks, this element ruled out of your existence as you sit basking in the huge gourd shadow of your labor union, contains the challenge that makes it all worth while; herein is the secret of poignant joy in

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living. Are you never to know the high content of dissatisfaction with yourself? Are there no heights in Arcady to climb? We have moved on from our sheltered pastoral fields, O inhabitants of Smithville, Berryville, and Jonesville Corners, and there is no returning. It will be well for you, if you are to survive—and arrive, to be up and doing.

There, at this minute, opposite sits the mason who is busy with my neighbor's house—sits upon the wall, waiting for eight o'clock for fear lest he give ten minutes' extra time. I, who am awakened by the early bird—it is an oriole—and am at my work betimes, realize that I have misspelled my title. I should have written, *A Modern Idle.*

Concerning Correspondence Schools

A SOMEWHAT supersubtle friend of mine, who is forever seeking to discover the hidden causes of all sorts of events, likes to explain the decline of negro-minstrelsy in the United States toward the end of the nineteenth century as caused in great measure by the coincident rise of after-dinner oratory. He maintains that the hunger of the normal human being for "chestnuts" being now stayed gratuitously by the post-prandial speakers, the Interlocutor and the End-Man could not withstand the competition and therefore went out of business. Probably a strict logician would dismiss this as a fallacy, denying that what is *post hoc* is necessarily *propter hoc.* And yet the suggestion is alluring, and it would account for the deliberate joke-hunting and for the persistent anecdote-mongering which debases so much of our latter-day dinner-table speaking.

Is it also fallacious to point out a similar connection between the strange vogue of Christian Science and the marvellous development of the Correspondence School in recent years? Is not the underlying theory of the Correspondence School a belief that Absent Treatment is available also in education? Hitherto the art of healing has always found its profit in the personal influence of the physician on the patient, direct and almost hypnotic; and yet this element is necessarily lacking in any system of Absent Treatment. Hitherto in the art of education, great stress has been laid on the personal contact of the teacher and the pupil, on the immediate but unconscious influence exerted by the gifted instructor in arousing and in stimulating the ambition of the aspiring beginner; and yet this element is necessarily lacking in any scheme of instruction by letters only. In both cases the impression of the wiser man upon the more ignorant is surrendered voluntarily.

That the Correspondence Schools are now flourishing is evidence that they have supplied an obvious deficiency in our previous educational arrangements, even if they have had to get along as best they could without the potent aid of the actual teacher's presence. Their popularity is proof also that the Complete Letter-Writer of our youthful days, with its forms for all sorts of occasions, was not really complete, since it did not engage to supply a perfect education also. There seems to be no field of instruction which the epistolary tutor is not now prepared to preëmpt. It is true that I have not happened yet to read any advertisement of a Correspondence Sunday-School, and yet such an institution may exist, even though I have no knowledge of it. Indeed, it seems impossible that the method of Absent Treatment should not have been applied to Religion as well as to Sign-Painting and Dentistry and English Literature.

I say this with the more confidence since I chanced recently to find in a column of educational advertisements two appeals to ambitious youth, which opened unexpected vistas as to the possibilities of instruction by letters. These two advertisements followed one another without the interposition of any other advertisement of any other Correspondence School. Thus displayed they afforded an example of what may perhaps be termed Humor by Juxtaposition. Here they are—with only a polite transformation of the address, made advisable solely because these remarks of mine are not intended for the advertising pages of this magazine:—

PLAYWRITING AS A PROFESSION brings fame and fortune. You need not be a genius to succeed. Full course by correspondence. Address Dramatic Institute, Bean City, Mass.

LEARN PLUMBING. Many of our students have graduated in four months and are earning regular plumber s wages. Illustrated catalogue Free. Mississippiville Trade School, Mississippiville, Mo.

The sole suggestion the reader may feel called upon to make is to the effect that it is a pity that the writer of the first advertisement did not declare that "many of our students are earning regular playwright's wages," and that the writer of the second advertisement did not assert that in plumbing "you need not be a genius to succeed."

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THE FIELD OF ART

CÉZANNE—AN INTRODUCTION

OF all the arts, painting is the one whose spread from land to land must always be the slowest. A new musical composer appears in Germany and his works may have their first auditions simultaneously in half a dozen of the great cities of the world. A great poet is heard in France and his works, in the original and in translation, may be read in San Francisco as in St. Petersburg, a short time after their publication in Paris. Even sculpture, by the quasi-perfection of the reproductive processes to which it lends itself, may be diffused about the world with the rapidity which its appreciation demands. But painting—limited to the unique examples which the master produces—travels far more slowly. Especially is this true when the relation is that of Europe to America. Constable could, after all, easily send his work to Paris when, in London, it did not meet with the success it deserved. Monet and Pissaro made their journey to the English capital in as few hours as they would have needed days, had an American gallery been the object of their study; and to-day, we see Rodin exhibiting in Prague, Manet's work being sent to Germany, and Sorolla's from southern Spain to Paris or London with comparative ease. But America, while presenting a rich field for artist and dealer, is so far off from the great European centres that with the cost and risks of transportation—not to speak of the great extra expense imposed by our hostile art-tariff,—the organizing of an exhibition of work by a new man or a new school is so hazardous a venture that it has rarely been undertaken. And so we have to-day the case of Cézanne—by all odds the strongest of recent influences in continental painting, and practically an unknown name in America!

To convince oneself of his importance in Europe, one need only glance at the great exhibitions. At the Salon d'Automne of last year there was a wonderful retrospective exhibition of some sixty Cézannes. And as one walked from these galleries into those filled with the current work of the year one felt almost that a separate group of pictures—and a large one—might have been made with such a title as "followers of Cézanne." With the impetus which the great retrospective gave to the study of the master (this being supplemented by at least one important private exhibition), the influence was still more marked at the Salon des Indépendants in the spring, where quite surely not less than four to five thousand pictures in that bewildering show of seven thousand works were other than they would have been if the painters had never known Cézanne. Even in the conservative and more or less official spring salons, where the work is principally by men who cannot readily change, either by the rigidity of their styles or the public's demand of a certain well-recognized order of work from them, the influence of Cézanne is plainly seen.

The younger men of Germany are basing their art on Cézanne to a very considerable degree, as a number of their elders did before them. Probably in no other country is there more eager buying of Cézanne's pictures, and a German painter tells me that in many and many a small city of his native land, there are more works by Cézanne to be seen than there are in the Luxembourg—this circumstance we must note, however, being far outbalanced for the art-lover in Paris by the quantities in the collections of dealers and connoisseurs, which are more accessible to the public in France than anywhere else.

Finally, the men who are bringing back the art of Paris to Austria, Hungary, Poland and Russia, may without hesitation be said to have chosen Cézanne as their favorite master and guide. England, as might be expected, remains true to its tradition of seeking inspiration at home.

Within the last few years much writing about Cézanne has been done; and widely differing judgments of his work have been made. Nowadays, the trend is more and more insistently to eulogy, even to the highest, most unbounded eulogy, and in anything like advanced quarters, derogation scarcely ventures a murmur. Only a short time ago was the period of equally divided combat, while before that, the painter, when mentioned at all, was merely a butt for ridicule.

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Manet and Monet were to the mass of the critics in the sixties, seventies, and eighties, outrageous and impious, but Cézanne was unspeakable. Even then, however, a few discerning men appreciated his pictures and Zola, that indomitable champion of greatness in adversity, was one of the number. He closely studied Cézanne as a model for the vital and epic central figure of his great novel "L'Œuvre," and, if the painter resented this, we must lay it in large part to the hostile suspicion with which his continued miscomprehension and ridicule from the public had led him to regard every one. And to this, also, the retirement to a remote part of southern France, Aix—his birthplace, where he spent the greater part of his life. In his latter years, this retirement was so complete that few people knew even whether he was living or dead. Had it not been for the enterprise and perseverance of one of his most impassioned admirers, Émile Bernard, the painter of the "Cairo Opium Smoker," of the Luxembourg, we should be practically without information about the period of Cézanne's most remarkable accomplishment. The record of his several visits to "his master," as he loves to call him, is published in *L'Occident*, for July, 1904, and more notably in the *Mercure de France*, in three numbers during the month of October, 1907. In the faithfully reported conversations, in the letters which he prints, in his own observations and his experiences with the old gentleman (for such Cézanne then was), we get an invaluable light on the personality whose course we shall attempt to follow.

Paul Cézanne was born at Aix, near Marseilles, in 1839. His father was a hatter who, thriving in his well-patronized establishment, was able to carry on a banking business with the funds he accumulated, and left to his two daughters and Paul a fortune which kept them in ease throughout their lives. Cézanne always spoke of his father with admiration and deep affection. "My father," he once told Bernard, "was a man of great insight. He said, 'My son is a dreamer; he will never be able to cope with the difficulties of the practical world, I must work for him, since he will not know how to do it for himself.' And so he toiled at his business in order that my sisters and myself might have the benefit." The young Cézanne had a good education, and it was at the school where he received it that he met Émile Zola, a fellow-student. Later he entered his father's bank, but at the age of twenty-three was allowed to go to Paris, to take up work more in accord with his tastes. He sought out Zola, who was already there, and the two associated on friendly terms for some time. It was their practice to make excursions into the country, and in some nook which they would select, to write verses together—frequently in Latin. "Mine were better than his," Cézanne was wont to affirm in later years. Notwithstanding this superiority (if it really existed), Zola began to achieve success and was soon so far ahead of his old schoolmate that the latter found the companionship far less attractive than it had been, and drew away from it. He entered an art academy, where Pissaro and Guillaumin were among his associates. The years went on without much result. Like many young men sent to the great cities and having a reliable stipend from home, Cézanne seems to have brought his work in art and literature only little above dilettantism. He himself said, "Until I was forty, I lived in Bohemia. Then I went to work with Pissaro and from him I learned to apply myself." The practice of continual, unremitting industry that he took from that tireless and beautiful painter became a habit which remained with him to the end. Even as an old and stricken man he would be at his studio at the earliest practicable hour, paint till noon and, after lunch and a rest, recommence for a long afternoon's work. Nothing was allowed to interfere with his routine, and we have the fact that even at the death of his mother—an event which was a deeper grief to him than to any other of his family—he had to make his daily excursion to the "motif"—the particular piece of landscape on which he was at work.

The change from his irregular life before he lived at Auvers sur Oise, near Pissaro, to the concentrated effort of his succeeding years, did not change Cézanne's standing as regards the public; and Meier-Graefe, in his spirited essay, tells that it was only through the influence exerted by a friend that the one picture the painter ever had accepted by the Salon was placed in the exhibition of 1882.

In ill health, but anxious to work and express the ideas which he at last felt to be mature, Cézanne went back to Aix, where he continued until his death in 1906. He was a constant sufferer during this period; even the short journey to Marseilles became extremely arduous for him and his life restricted itself to the daily round of studio, the "motif," the

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studio and home. Bernard gives some charming glimpses of the personal side of the man,—of his affection for his son Paul, and of his whimsical good humor at meals (when he was not, as frequently occurred, too much absorbed in painting mental pictures of the people about him or the still-life on the table).

The non-acceptance of his work by the juries was a matter of great mortification to him, but, like Manet, he always looked to see the tide of opinion turn in his favor. Unlike Manet, who stayed in the society which rejected his work and had personal friends who kept him in countenance, Cézanne let his feelings get the better of his logic and came to look on the people who took any interest in his work with morbid suspicion. Especially were women and priests the objects of his distrust; the former because he imagined that they wanted to entrap him and steal the secrets of his art; the latter because he feared they would, for the same purpose, gain an ascendency over him by means of his deep feeling for religion. Thus it was with great surprise that he found out that a certain priest with whom he was accidentally brought into acquaintance was really a very fine man. During his latter years he would have no models for the nude, and the effect of this on his pictures is only too apparent. His old housekeeper, a good and faithful woman of whom he thought highly, had orders never to touch him, even with the hem of her skirt. "Ah," he would exclaim, "they think I have a trick, and that they will get it out of me, but never, never will they get their hooks on it!"—"mettre le grappin dessus" as his own expression was. This distrustfulness once led to a misunderstanding even with the devoted Bernard, but after running away from him at top speed and taking refuge in his house, Cézanne evidently repented, and made overtures of reconciliation, which the pupil was glad to accept, and a greater freedom of the master's studio than he had before enjoyed was the result.

Cézanne's methods, like so many things connected with him, were peculiar to himself. He had the rare faculty of being able to keep up his interest in a picture, even after it had eluded and disappointed him several times. Once convinced that he was in pursuit of the thing desired, he was unrelenting in his efforts to attain it and in his refusal to accept anything else. Thus a picture might be worked on at more or less distant dates over a long period—sometimes growing worse, sometimes better, until the time when it was satisfactory or, once in a while, so far miscarried as to make his abandoning it a necessity. On the other hand, if he felt that he was on a really false track, he would throw aside the study from the very first. It was not his usual practice to destroy these canvases, but to store them in a sort of attic in his studio where large numbers of them accumulated, together with notes and sketches from nature. This collection served as a reference for him, a place to consult past work, make comparisons as to his progress. He would not allow these pictures to be shown in exhibitions, and it was only after his death that they were placed on view, though some had gone forth through various channels before, and much mischief has been done to their author's reputation by people who judged his art from these unrepresentative productions.

The exhibiting of sketches is always accompanied by danger, and most of all so, when, as in the present case, the finished works which alone could make them comprehensible are insufficiently known. By degrees, however, the feeling grew with a part of the public that despite the faults and eccentricities which they so much reprehended in Cézanne's work, there were still good phases to it, and as we always see, where really important qualities begin to emerge from the haze of misunderstanding, it takes no great time until the bad, which had first appeared insurmountable, is quite dwarfed by the good. From a scattering representation in various galleries, as arranged by his agent in Paris, Cézanne passed to his first private exhibition at Vollard's gallery in 1895. Since then the prices of his works have mounted uninterruptedly until with the advent of an American multi-millionaire, they soared almost hopelessly out of the reach of the people, often of modest means, who were the first to buy his work.

And what are the qualities of this work which at first seemed so absurd and later so fine? To say that its primary importance is as a vehicle by which a great personality reaches us, might appear something between a truism and an evasion. But until the science of æsthetics makes such progress that a canon may be applied, this somewhat unsatisfactory generalization will remain the first reason of the critic for his admirations. It applies to Cézanne quite closely, however, for his greatness lies more in an intensely individual way of seeing nature than as an expressor of ab-

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stract artistic concepts. In other terms, he falls in with the class headed by such men as Giotto and Rembrandt, who merged their æsthetic qualities inextricably with their particular viewing of the world and its people—rather than with the class to which Leonardo and Rubens belong, where interest focuses on the grand syntheses of drawing and color.

As a painter of men and women, Cézanne shows a profundity of understanding and sympathy which would suffice alone to excite the admiration of the earnest student. His workman is presented to us in a different manner from that of Millet, for while the latter dwells entirely on the toiler in relation to his task, Cézanne treats him as a person, to be studied at once for his own sake and in the diverse activities of his life. Thus there are pictures where a workman sits with a pipe, to be painted from the same standpoint as a lady with her fan, and also groups of workmen in a café, playing cards, etc., etc. A Cézanne portrait has that haunting look of the sitter's personality which carries us back rapidly to the work of Greco. Indeed, there have been few, if any, cases of apparent atavism so striking as that which is almost always remarked between Greco of the sixteenth century and the man who was but recently in our midst. There is the same insistence on the important—at whatever expense to the minor matters of superficial fidelity to nature; and what is even more strange, their very virtues and defects took much the same course, so that to mistake at the first glance certain works of Greco for Cézannes is neither difficult nor without precedent.

The landscape pictures are characterized by a seriousness which sometimes amounts to positive austerity. In them we become more conscious of Cézanne's great æsthetic quality—Form; while in the still-life, that field of art where the expression of the object is evidently at its least, we have the painter's mastery of this master-problem as a recurring and unmistakable note. And it is at this point that he reaches out from the class of men who are first of all expressors, and allies himself as well to the classical school with its impersonal laws.

It was natural that through his association with the group which may be credited with the renewal of color in European art, Cézanne should himself have become a colorist, but this matter of his passion for form as a pure abstract quality seems very much due to his work by himself—natural inclination and such rudiments of the study as he took from the painters who were his comrades at Paris also having their share in it. Cézanne seems to combine the position of the primitives who evolved their wonderful art with comparatively little help from the past, and that of the moderns who have so much of precedent and example that they are almost embarrassed in their selection of standards.

The early works of Cézanne show the clearest influence of Courbet and Manet. They are dark and often heavy, the strong modelling which he sought, being attained by black-and-white values, almost entirely. The impasto is thick as it always was with Courbet, and till late in life, with Manet. It would be interesting to collect data on the masters of painting as such, and see how many have gone from a uniformly heavy pigment to thin paint with only an occasional emphasis or staccato-note of solid color. And among these men Cézanne would belong. Pissaro gave him the modern clarity of tone, receiving in exchange the influence of his friend's splendid feeling for the broad and simple planes into which the genius knows how to organize the infinitude of little tints and spots that are seen in nature. From the time of his return to Aix we find Cézanne taking heed of no new influence,—reproductions in books and the ancient works in the churches of his town being almost all the art which fell under his notice.

Where no living traditions exist, such as those which sustained the art of the long series of men whom we call the old masters, the experimenter is almost sure to let go of some phase of his work while he is trying for others. So Cézanne, interested in character, in form, and in the color, from which he drew such a rare beauty, concerned himself little with the realistic finish which the public of his time demanded, nor with the finesse and subtlety of line-drawing and the care as to accurate natural proportion which they had learned from Ingres to expect. But it is the fortunate, or rather the great artist, who knows how to choose what is important and hold to it even when he must give up the less important. Today there is an increase of hopeful indication that art-students, whether professionals, critics, or laymen, are giving less attention to the externals and caring more for what is within—the structural, the significant. And not the least of these signs is the high rank which in recent years has been conceded to Paul Cézanne.

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